

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

C929

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE (Of which some notice has been given)

Thursday, 28 November 2013

Hon Robin Chapple to the Minister for Mental Health representing the Minister for Environment.

I refer to a statement made by the Minister for Environment (Hansard, 20th August 2013 - p180a-190a) regarding the Government's decision to cease funding Kimberley Toad Busters in the current financial year, and I ask:

1. What is the role of the State Cane Toad coordinator and what is the budget they have to work with?
2. Which islands off the Kimberley coast are being used as wildlife refuges and how is the health and wellbeing of wildlife being monitored?
3. With limited mobile phone coverage in most parts of the Kimberley, will the Minister please explain how Kimberley communities and visitors will be able to access the cane toad app he launched a few months ago?
4. The Kimberley Toad Busters are continuing aspects of their work on a voluntary basis, especially the community education and biodiversity conservation parts of the program, in an effort to slow the 'cane toad front' as it moves westwards. When are the cane toads expected to reach the major river systems of the West Kimberley and when will they arrive in the tourist town of Broome?
5. What is the Government doing to prepare tourism operators and resort managers for the arrival of the Cane toads?

I thank the Hon. Member for some notice of this question.

The Minister for Environment has provided the following response.

1. The State Cane Toad coordinator manages the implementation of the *Cane Toad Strategy for Western Australia*, this includes coordinating the implementation of the Kimberley islands project within the *Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy*. The budget is \$750 000 per year.
2. The Kimberley islands have been prioritised for their conservation value and representative species that are most likely to be impacted by cane toads. There are 30 islands that are considered to be a priority. A biosecurity strategy is being developed and will identify quarantine and surveillance activities. Six of these 30 Kimberley islands will be surveyed and monitoring plots established in 2014.

3. The cane toad app was a joint project with University of Western Australia's Centre for Excellence in Learning (SPICE) unit, the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW) and the Kimberley Toad Busters. The app complements community education programs and resources developed by DPaW. All major towns in the Kimberley have mobile phone coverage.
4. The rate of expansion of cane toads will be determined by rainfall, terrain and temperatures. Based on the current rate of expansion of 50 kilometres per year, there is potential for cane toads to reach Halls Creek during this wet season, Fitzroy Crossing and Derby in two to three years and Broome in five years or more. Cane toads potentially could reach the upper parts of west Kimberley rivers this wet season, but they have not arrived on the western shore of the Cambridge Gulf to date.
5. Information is available to community members, tourism operators and resort managers from DPaW offices in Broome and Kununurra as well as the department's website. A cane toad newsletter is produced quarterly providing information on the *State Cane Toad Strategy*. It is available from DPaW offices in the Kimberley, is published to the department's website and is emailed to key stakeholders.

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