

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**  
**Question on notice**

**Tuesday, 19 August 2014**

1486. Hon Robin Chapple to the Minister for Agriculture and Food.

With regard to Government and government-initiated monitoring of the condition of Western Australia's pastoral rangelands:


- (a) what programs have operated over the past 20 years and across what years;
- (b) for each program, what is/was its specific purpose;
- (c) how many full time equivalent positions have been employed in the operations of each of these programs for each year, for the past 20 years;
- (d) what was the annual expenditure on each of these programs for the past 20 years;
- (e) what are the budget allocations for these programs in the forward estimates;
- (f) how will the information collected on the condition of individual leases be used in the process to renew pastoral leases on 1 July 2015;
- (g) what programs and or methods for monitoring of rangelands conditions on each pastoral lease will be implemented from 1 July 2015;
- (h) how has the substantial amount of evidence-based rangeland condition information provided by the Department of Agriculture and Food been used by the Pastoral Lands Board to administer adherence to lease conditions; and
- (i) as an economic development agency, are rangeland management and development decisions underpinned by sound natural resource management science?

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**Answer**

- a) The Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia (DAFWA) commenced the West Australian Rangeland Monitoring System (WARMS) in 1993. The system became fully operational in 1995 in the northern grasslands, and in 1999 in the southern shrublands. WARMS has operated in all years since 1993. Through its pastoral lease inspection activity, DAFWA assessed rangeland condition on individual pastoral leases until 2009. Since the Pastoral Lands Board's (PLB) adoption of Rangeland Condition Monitoring in 2009, DAFWA has assessed rangeland condition trend on pastoral leases identified as at risk of exhibiting land management issues.
  
- b) The purpose of WARMS is to assess rangelands condition at the landscape level across the pastoral estate. The purpose of pastoral lease inspections is both to provide the PLB with the information it requires to perform its land management responsibility under the *Land Administration Act 1997* (LAA), and to support landholders in applying sustainable land management practices.

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- c) During the last 20 years, DAFWA's rangeland monitoring activity has resided in different projects, many of which were also engaged in non-monitoring activities such as livestock industry development and/or biosecurity. Therefore, it is not possible to advise staffing allocations to rangelands monitoring with precision. Since 2008, staff specifically allocated to rangeland assessment monitoring is estimated at 6 FTEs.
  - d) See question c). It is not possible to advise with precision the level of annual expenditure in rangelands monitoring over the last 20 years.
  - e) Forward estimates do not provide budget allocations at the project level. Within the project planning framework, DAFWA's intent is to maintain the current resourcing of rangeland monitoring.
  - f) This question should be referred to the Minister for Lands.
  - g) This question should be referred to the Minister for Lands.
  - h) DAFWA's assessment of lease level rangeland condition has supported the PLB's responsibility under the LAA and particularly informed the PLB's issuance of land management directives against land holders in situations where land management issues are identified.
  - i) As an economic development agency, DAFWA's monitoring and assessment of rangeland conditions in the pastoral estate is based on sound scientific principles that inextricably link rangeland condition with its productivity for grazing livestock. DAFWA's advice is predicated on an understanding that producers and stakeholders alike will apply this information to enhance pastoral sustainability and natural resource values.

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**MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE AND FOOD**