

CANE TOADS — STATE FUNDING

**706. Hon NIGEL HALLETT to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for the Environment:**

- (1) Of the \$900 000 allocated to perform basic work to protect the state from cane toads in 2008-09, can the minister please advise what amounts will be allocated to —
- (a) the Perth staff and offices of the Department of Environment and Conservation;
  - (b) the Kununurra staff and offices of the Department of Environment and Conservation;
  - (c) Kimberley Toad Busters;
  - (d) research, and to whom; and
  - (e) developing a cane toad control management plan for the Kimberley?
- (2) What additional money, if any, will be allocated for cane toad control and research in 2008-09?

**Hon SALLY TALBOT replied:**

I thank Hon Nigel Hallett for some notice of this question, to which the minister has provided the following answer —

The final budgets and expenditure for 2008-09 for the state cane toad initiative will rest in part on joint programs still in development with the commonwealth government associated with its Caring for our Country program. Initial budget settings for 2008-09, which may be altered during the year, are provided in answer to the member's specific questions. Historically, the funding provided to the cane toad issue by the state government is well over and above that which is outlined in the budget due to the constantly changing nature of this challenge. The specific answers are as follows.

- (1)
- (a) An amount of \$150 000 has been allocated for project management assistance and advice, external liaison and development of community awareness and cooperation programs.
  - (b) An amount of \$600 000 has been allocated to cover the costs of the state cane toad team and sniffer dog based in Kununurra, their associated work programs and assisting in the further development of the cane toad strategy. Work programs include on-ground surveillance and control, as well as the continued support of community groups and the further development of biodiversity monitoring programs.
  - (c) There is no specific allocation for Kimberley Toad Busters in this funding. Such assistance is normally derived from other sources and special funding allocations, but it can include some of the money allocated to the Department of Environment and Conservation for the Kununurra-based operations identified in part (a). Over the past year the state has allocated from various sources more than \$500 000 in assistance for community efforts against cane toads by Kimberley Toad Busters and Stop The Toad Foundation. This funding represented additional specific allocations to the community groups and was not part of the 2007-08 budget.
  - (d) The state government has already contributed significant funding to a variety of research projects, including \$850 000 to the cane toad genome research project, more than \$4 million to a biological survey of the Kimberley islands, and \$60 000 to a University of Sydney study led by Professor Rick Shine. Of the \$900 000 budgeted for in 2008-09, up to \$150 000 has been initially identified for research funding and will likely be supplemented from other sources. Negotiations are continuing on the use of these funds, which we hope will be supplemented with commonwealth funding. A key area of interest is the proposed research by the University of Sydney into the parasitic lungworm and other avenues for possibly reducing the fitness of cane toads, as well as continued work on the impact of toads on native species.
  - (e) The budget for further developing cane toad strategies, including any management plan, will primarily come from the \$750 000 allocated to the projects referred to in parts (a) and (b). The state government has recently appointed a cane toad coordinator in Kununurra. The key role of this coordinator is to liaise with stakeholders and the community in the preparation of a cane toad management plan.
- (2) The state has already committed a special additional allocation of \$150 000, which is additional to the \$900 000, to implement the new coordinator position based in Kununurra, including the operation of a stakeholder working group. It is anticipated that a cooperative program also will be developed with the

commonwealth, given its announcement of funding for projects to work against cane toads. This may involve additional state allocations from other sources.