

DIEBACK

161. Hon SALLY TALBOT to the minister representing the Minister for Environment:

This question is a bit long, so I will read it very fast.

- (1) Is the minister aware that a recent report by the Conservation Commission found that poor management and systemic failings by the Department of Environment and Conservation have hastened the spread of dieback in WA?
- (2) Is the minister satisfied that DEC's monitoring of activities involving soil disturbance is adequate?
- (3) What measures does DEC use to protect areas that are dieback free from the threat posed by the movement of soil from infected areas, the spread of dieback during fire management and the use of gravel that is contaminated?
- (4) When were DEC's best practice guidelines for the management of dieback last updated?
- (5) How much did the government spend in 2008–09 and 2009–10 on dieback eradication and protection programs in the Fitzgerald River National Park?
- (6) When did the Dieback Consultative Council last meet?
- (7) When did the Dieback Response Group last meet?
- (8) Does the minister consider that his powers to prosecute a person or company whose actions result in the spread of dieback are sufficient?

The PRESIDENT: The Minister for Mental Health in answer to that question that very much stretches the boundaries of "concise".

Hon HELEN MORTON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

(1)–(3) I am aware of the Conservation Commission's report and the Department of Environment and Conservation's response. DEC is strengthening measures to manage dieback, including upgrading management procedures, upgrading dieback hygiene protocols and facilities, improving staff training and awareness, and continuing research aimed at developing new control techniques. DEC continues to improve its systems as part of its own ongoing performance and in response to the challenges identified by the Conservation Commission. The state government has recognised that dieback is a priority and has allocated \$1.6 million to DEC and South Coast Natural Resource Management for the project titled "Dieback Eradication Fitzgerald River National Park (FRNP) and Urgent Dieback Protection Actions".

- (4) The best practice guidelines are currently being updated. They were last updated in 1998.
- (5) DEC expended over \$450 000 in direct actions in the Fitzgerald River National Park in 2008–09 and over \$350 000 in 2009–10. This was in addition to the \$1.6 million allocated over the 2009–10 and 2010–11 financial years and does not include normal park management activities such as road maintenance and closures that are directed towards dieback management to a significant degree.
- (6) October 2010.
- (7) The Dieback Response Group has been replaced by an informal dieback coordination group, with representation from DEC, the Centre for Phytophthora Science and Management at Murdoch University, the Dieback Working Group, Perth Region NRM and the NRM-funded Project Dieback. The group last met in August 2010 and has progressed a number of initiatives, including the development of the priority protection areas concept across the south west.
- (8) Yes.