

WOOD HEATERS

333. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Minister for the Environment:

I understand that wood heaters contribute unacceptable amounts of particulates to Perth's atmosphere every winter, which can cause serious respiratory problems. What is the Government doing to address these issues?

Dr J.M. EDWARDS replied:

I thank the member for the question and for his interest in this area. Anyone driving down Greenmount hill on a cold winter's morning would notice a brown smudge on the horizon. Unfortunately, in winter Perth suffers a problem with haze from wood-burning heaters. Not only is this an amenity and aesthetic issue, but also health problems are associated with people inhaling those tiny particulates. To help tackle that problem, this Government has initiated a buyback program for old wood heaters. I am delighted that the program is taking place in the member's electorate. It is taking place through three local governments that have expressed a particular interest in participating in the program. Therefore, people living in the Cities of Joondalup and Melville and the Town of Kwinana will be reimbursed \$600 when they trade in their wood heaters and buy a flued gas heater. This program will be delivered through those local government areas and at the same time we will conduct a survey to determine why people in those areas have the heaters, how old they are and whether the program is enough of an incentive for them to change their behaviour. Depending on the results of the program, we will consider extending it. At the same time the Department of Environment has initiated a program in the schools in those local government areas to survey air quality and to get people more in touch with their local air-quality initiatives. In addition, we have been training local government officers more broadly than those areas to deal with the difficult issue of smoke from wood heaters. On top of the regulations concerning the moisture content of wood used in wood-burning heaters, the haze alert program and the new program of buying back heaters shows that the Government takes winter haze very seriously and that it is working to try to get on top of what is not only an environmental issue, but also a public health issue.

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Warren-Blackwood to order for the second time.