

MT STIRLING NATURE RESERVE, ECHIDNA COLONY

759. Dr EDWARDS to the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) Is the Minister or the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) aware of the echidna colony in the Mt Stirling Nature Reserve near Quairading?
- (2) Has the colony been studied, and if so, are there any published reports on it?
- (3) Are there any other published flora or fauna surveys or studies available on Mt Stirling Nature Reserve?
- (4) What management plan is in place to ensure the long term survival and viability of the echidna colony?
- (5) Is there any active management of the Mt Stirling Nature Reserve, and if so what form does this take?
- (6) How much has been spent by CALM on managing and protecting this nature reserve in each of the past five years?
- (7) Are the neighbouring landowners aware of the significance of the nature reserve and the threats to its conservation values, including stock grazing and weed spread?
- (8) Given that the use of fire in this reserve will encourage the spread of weeds, what is being done to ensure fire management that reduces this risk?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

- (1) Yes. CALM staff have seen echidnas on Mt Stirling Nature Reserve.
- (2-3) No.
- (4) Echidnas have persisted in nearly every habitat in Australia and are not considered at risk in any state including Western Australia. No specific echidna management occurs on this reserve. A fox-baiting program does occur for the protection of Rock Wallaby. This will certainly also provide protection to echidnas on the reserve.
- (5) Yes. Feral animal and weed control.
- (6) There are over 200 nature reserves in CALM's Narrogin District, including Mt Stirling. In the past expenditure has been amalgamated across all of these reserves. Six of these reserves, including Mt Stirling are specifically fox baited for rock wallaby conservation. Recorded expenditure for reserve management across all nature reserves in the District are presented below along with the specific fox control for six reserves.

Fox Baiting		Reserve Management	
Year	Expenditure	Year	Expenditure
1999-2000	\$6,000.00	1999-2000	\$136,412.90
1998-1999	\$4,054.90	1998-1999	\$126,083.67
1997-1998	\$579.94	1997-1998	\$83,701.93
1996-1997	\$7,714.50	1996-1997	\$91,947.92
1995-1996	\$3,201.94	1995-1996	\$94,851.81
Total	\$21,551.28	Total	\$532,998.23

- (7) This question has not been asked directly. The neighbours have been very supportive of the rock wallaby program and appear to understand the significance of the reserve and the threat that feral animals can pose.
- (8) There are fire access tracks around several boundaries of the reserve. The Narrogin District maintains two heavy duties fire trucks, and three light pumped units in Narrogin and Pingelly. An after hours contact system is run during the fire season.