PRESCRIBED BURNING — BLACK COCKATOOS

3240. Hon Diane Evers to the Minister for Environment:

(1) Before conducting a prescribed burn, does the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) evaluate how many black cockatoo habitat trees (forage and nesting) will be impacted by the burn:

(a) if yes to (1), how is this done?

(2) During the past financial year, how many black cockatoo habitat trees in the southwest forest regions were impacted by prescribed burns?

(3) Does DBCA know how many nesting black cockatoos in the southwest forest regions are impacted by prescribed burns and the mortality of chicks and fledgling cockatoos that they cause:

(a) if yes to (3), during the past financial year, how many nesting black cockatoos were impacted by prescribed burns and what was the mortality of chicks and fledgling cockatoos caused by prescribed burns?

Hon Stephen Dawson replied:

(1)–(3) During the prescribed burn planning process, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions' (DBCA) staff consider a range of environmental values identified in corporate datasets, including threatened species. This desktop planning process is enhanced by local input being provided by DBCA conservation staff into the pre-burn, day of burn and post-burn components of the burn prescription and how the burn is undertaken. Noting that the area of the south-west forest estate managed by DBCA is approximately 2.6 million hectares of primarily native vegetation, it is not practical for DBCA to collect data on individual black cockatoo habitat trees at this scale, unless it is associated with a discrete monitoring or research project.

From a biodiversity perspective, prescribed burning is undertaken to maintain a range of wildlife habitat types through the creation of low-fuel areas in a mosaic of burnt and unburnt patches across the landscape. Prescribed burns occur in more favourable conditions than intense summer bushfires, enabling animals more opportunities to safely move into areas of unburnt vegetation and various plant species opportunities to regenerate.