

ROSS RIVER VIRUS, PEEL REGION

252. Mr A.D. Marshall to the Minister for Health

- (1) Have Ross River Virus reported cases increased in the Peel Region?
- (2) What is the breakdown of reported cases in every region of Western Australia over the last 5 years?
- (3) Has a medication been found to help Ross River Virus sufferers?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

1. Overall, the incidence of Ross River virus disease in the Peel Region has increased since the Dawesville Channel was opened in 1994, as was predicted by the Department of Health in 1992. However, during the last two seasons (2000/01 and 2001/02), favourable environmental conditions have resulted in well below-average numbers of cases of Ross River virus disease in the region.
2. The incidence of Ross River virus disease in different regions of WA varies dramatically from year to year, according to prevailing environmental conditions. The number of serologically confirmed reported cases summarised by Public Health Region since 1 January 1997 is:

Kimberley:	339
Pilbara:	344
Gascoyne:	107
Goldfields:	179
Midwest:	112
Coastal and Wheatbelt:	133
Great southern:	152
Southwest:	958
Perth metro (east):	265
Perth metro (north):	157
Perth metro (south):	254
Total:	3000

These figures do not reflect the attack rate (risk of RR virus adjusted for population). Although most cases have been reported from the populous South-West, the risk of contracting RR virus is actually higher in the Kimberley, Pilbara and other regions, where there are many fewer people.

3. There are no vaccines or specific cures for Ross River virus disease. Patients are generally prescribed analgesics or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs to manage the symptoms. Prevention of exposure to infected mosquitoes remains the best 'cure'.