MOSQUITO BREEDING, MANDURAH, RUNNELLING PROJECT

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

I refer to the $250,000 Runnelling Project in Mandurah to combat mosquito breeding which was started in 2001 and ask -

(a) when will it be completed;

(b) what specific areas were targeted;

(c) where can a runnel be observed;

(d) how many locations have been completed;

(e) what locations still need attention;

(f) what is the cost of the project so far;

(g) what are the objectives of the project; and

(h) have these objectives been achieved?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

The budget for the runnelling project in the Peel Region is an average of $250 000/year for 4 years (totalling $1 million).

(a) It is anticipated that the project will be completed during the summer of 2004/05. This completion date is subject to favourable environmental conditions that allow access and effective operation of the runnelling machine on the saltmarshes.

(b) The project has targeted 35 saltmarshes that were identified by mosquito control officers from the Peel Region Contiguous Local Authority Group for mosquito control as the most prolific saltmarsh mosquito breeding sites in close proximity to major residential areas in the Peel region.

(c) Runnels installed as part of the current project can be observed at six saltmarshes in the Peel region: Furnissdale, Placid Waters (2 sites), Riverside Gardens, Mandurah Gardens Estate and Riverview.

(d) Runnels have been installed at six saltmarshes sites (listed in (c) above). Preparatory work (cultural heritage significance, topographic and acid sulphate soil surveys) has also been completed for the 12 sites to be runnelled this coming summer.

(e) A further 29 sites will be runnelled over the next three summers, subject to favourable environmental conditions.

(f) To date the project has cost approximately $310 000. This includes the cost of cultural heritage surveys at all 35 sites, development of a purpose-built runnelling machine, topographical and acid sulphate soil surveys at 18 sites, installation of runnels at Stage 1 sites and a year of intensive environmental monitoring at Stage 1 sites. The budget is therefore well on track.

(g) Runnels will reduce our reliance on ongoing and costly chemical for mosquito control at prolific mosquito breeding sites by making conditions less favourable for survival of larval mosquitoes on the marsh. At the same time, the environmental impact of runnels in these important conservation areas will be minimal.

(h) Preliminary results from the intensive environmental monitoring and larval mosquito surveys indicate that the runnels installed to date are achieving their intended purpose.