

CANE TOADS

Mrs C.A. MARTIN to the Minister for the Environment:

Can the minister advise the house what the state government is doing to step up the fight against cane toads?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

I thank the member for Kimberley for her ongoing advocacy and passionate stance against what is a grave threat to Western Australia. Of course, I am very pleased to highlight to the house that earlier this month, the Carpenter government, through the Premier, announced further funding towards the fight against this insidious creature that is the cane toad. This will add to the \$11 million - making a total of \$12 million - that this government has invested in the struggle against this insidious creature. Part of the \$1 million additional funding that was announced earlier this month by the Premier includes an amount of \$500 000 towards groundbreaking research led by Professor Grant Morahan from the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research. His work will be focused particularly on what biological and genetic weapons can be developed against this insidious creature that threatens the ecology and biodiversity of Western Australia. That funding includes money that has been allocated to the wonderful work that is being done by the many volunteers in the Kimberley area. That includes Kimberley Toad Busters, which over a long period of time has been fighting a hands-on attack against this insidious creature that threatens our state. That group deserves congratulations. It includes volunteers in the Kimberley, who have been working diligently over many months collecting cane toads inside the Northern Territory border. Additional moneys have also been provided to the Stop The Toad Foundation to assist in its toad muster. We also have included in that announcement an amount of \$150 000 -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Members opposite do not care one iota about the biota of this state! They do not care! All they can do is carp and have a go. They did nothing to stop cane toads when they were in power. They did not acknowledge, or understand, that this is a major threat to Western Australia. We need only look to Canberra. We have been asking Canberra to see this as a national imperative. We have been asking the federal Minister for the Environment and Water Resources to accept the fact that this is something that we should be tackling across the states, because this is an insidious creature that will cause huge problems if it comes into this state. However, when we asked the federal environment minister for a response, we got nothing from him. If cane toads were marching into the seat of Wentworth in New South Wales, we would soon get a response from the federal environment minister. We get nothing from those other states. The fact is that the alternative federal government already acknowledges and understands the threat. Yesterday, the alternative federal environment minister, if a Rudd government is elected in November, announced \$2 million in funding. However, there has been nothing from the federal government in Canberra towards a national strategy to attack cane toads.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: This government has a very strong record, with its investment of over \$12 million, in tackling this problem. It is sad that we have no acknowledgment of this problem in a national context from the national government. However, we do have that acknowledgment from the alternative federal government, through the opposition environment spokesman. This government will continue to support the communities in the Kimberley, and the efforts of the volunteers, to ensure that the cane toad is tackled, and that everything possible is done to stop its intrusion into our great state through the Kimberley region.