

## AMAZON FROGBIT

### Grievance

**MS L.L. BAKER (Maylands — Deputy Speaker)** [9.46 am]: This morning, I rise to address the minister representing our Minister for Regional Development; Agriculture and Food, and I believe that would be Minister Templeman.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** Yes, it is!

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Jolly good. Minister Templeman, today I rise to bring to the attention of the house a significant threat to Western Australian waterways, especially our iconic Swan River. *Limnobium laevigatum*, which has the benign and slightly amusing name of Amazon frogbit, is a floating aquatic weed originating from Central and South America. It may sound neutral, but it is actually pretty awful. Frogbit has been distributed for use in private ponds and aquariums, and is promoted as an easy-to-maintain plant. However, when allowed to enter waterways, this destructive weed is a highly invasive species, with a rapid growth rate and high reproduction potential. In other words, it spreads really quickly. Frogbit can form dense mats across the surface of water, congest drains and waterways, displace native vegetation and greatly impact water quality and habitat for native wildlife. This species has the potential to result in significant environmental damage and, accordingly, economic cost.

The species has naturalised in a number of locations overseas and at several locations along the eastern Australian coastline. I understand that Amazon frogbit was initially discovered in Western Australian waterways back in 2013 and there have been a number of detections since, including, unfortunately, recently in my electorate. Each infestation has been an isolated incident thought to result from residents inappropriately disposing of their aquarium into the stormwater network or directly into the waterway. In December 2017, plant fragments were collected from the precious Bayswater Brook by officers of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and were positively identified as the invasive Amazon frogbit. The site was just 500 metres upstream from the confluence with the Swan River and close to our very valuable, delicate and much-loved wetland in the Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary.

Through the swift work of officers from DBCA, the Water Corporation, the City of Bayswater and the South East Regional Centre for Urban Landcare, the infestation was removed and plant fragments were contained before they could spread into the Swan River—we hope. Frogbit has been declared a prohibited matter in New South Wales, a C-class weed in the Northern Territory and an environmental weed by the Brisbane City Council. Minister, I understand that at the moment Amazon frogbit is not a declared pest under the Western Australian Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007. Groups such as Environment House in my electorate of Bayswater and the amazing South East Regional Centre for Urban Landcare have been seeking to get it listed for some time to make sure it is appropriately controlled. I urge the minister to please take the necessary steps to ensure this potentially devastating weed is effectively controlled before there can be further damage to our environment. Thank you, minister.

**MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House)** [9.50 am]: Thank you, member for Maylands, for your grievance. This is a very serious matter. I was practising my David Attenborough impression earlier today, but I will not do that now!

Several members interjected.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I will save that.

**Mr I.C. Blayney:** Why not try?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** It is pretty good. As the member for Maylands said, *Limnobium laevigatum*, which is known more commonly as Amazon frogbit, is a highly invasive weed. As has been highlighted, it is a weed that can double its biomass in a few days, and that means, of course, that the spread is rapid. It does that both vegetatively and by seed—two methods by which the spread can take place rapidly. As the member highlighted, it has been predominantly sold as an aquarium species. I think this underpins the importance of issues with koi carp and other species of aquatic fauna. This is, of course, a floral, if you like, plant life that can have a devastating effect on our system. Indeed, it is a real threat to the wetlands and the Swan River catchment, as the member highlighted. I understand that outbreaks occurred in Bannister Creek in the City of Canning in 2014. I am not sure whether the member is aware of that. They also occurred in the Balannup drain, in the City of Armadale, in 2016, member for Armadale, and in Yangebup Lake in 2016, member for Jandakot, in the City of Cockburn. Through some good and effective responses by state and local government authorities and SERCUL, those outbreaks were discovered and controlled. But it highlights the ever-existing need to make sure that we are monitoring it and responding as quickly as possible. The member for Maylands highlighted the Bayswater outbreak and the response. I acknowledge also the work of the officers of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions with regard to its identification. I acknowledge also the responses of other government agencies, including the Water Corporation and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

As the member highlighted, currently, Amazon frogbit does not have a declared pest status. She is right; representations have been made by a number of local government authorities and land care organisations such as SERCUL, seeking that it be declared a pest under the BAM act. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development has completed a technical assessment to inform decision-makers about that potential declaration of the species under that assessment. I am very pleased to highlight to the member that that extensive assessment—a range of elements need to be included in such an assessment—has identified that Amazon frogbit meets the requirements for declaration as a pest species, and that is wonderful. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development has consulted with the relevant stakeholders to identify the most appropriate declaration status. This has been an important process of consideration. The process commenced in April this year and involved a four-week consultation period, followed by a four-week period to collate responses. It has been agreed that Amazon frogbit, or *Limnobium laevigatum*, its biological name, should be declared a pest under the BAM act.

**Ms L.L. Baker:** Well done, minister!

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** As the representative of the Minister for Agriculture and Food in this place, and with my eminent experience in the field of agriculture, having had grandparents—the Bates family—who farmed in Narrogin very successfully —

**Mr I.C. Blayney:** You taught in Three Springs.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Yes, and I was born in Northam. Credentials—throw me more credentials; more bouquets my way!

I mean this very seriously because it is very important. Effective from tomorrow, Friday, 12 October 2018, Amazon frogbit will be registered and declared a pest under the BAM act. I think the member for Maylands should take due credit for this announcement, as well as I do in announcing it. It is important. In a serious sense, this underpins the importance of our biosecurity in Western Australia. We are always under threat from invasive species that can, as we know, have a destructive and detrimental effect on agriculture and the environment. I am really pleased that as of tomorrow, Amazon frogbit will be a declared pest. It underpins the importance of the fact, as the member for Maylands highlights on many occasions, that we are all responsible for being vigilant. When we are purchasing aquariums and those sorts of aquatic things, we need to be well aware of the lasting impact it can have if we do not dispose of or deal with what we are purchasing in an appropriate manner. It can have a devastating effect on our native fauna and flora, our wetlands and our river systems.

Well done, member for Maylands. What a great achievement today in our first hour of Parliament sitting. You have secured the declaration of another pest.