

CALM'S PRESCRIBED BURNING PROGRAM

**317. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage:**

Will the minister outline the progress that has been made regarding the Department of Conservation and Land Management's prescribed burning program?

**Dr J.M. EDWARDS replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question. Anyone who saw the footage of the fires in New South Wales at the weekend would be thinking about the devastating impact of wildfire. For those reasons, I appreciate what was said last week about prescribed burning and the need for us to continue doing that.

Mr P.D. Omodei interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warren-Blackwood!

Dr J.M. EDWARDS: I am pleased to report that on the weekend CALM undertook another five burns in the south west, near Denmark, Walpole, Manjimup, Nannup and Harvey, and the area burnt was around 8 000 hectares. CALM has a program each year of trying to burn around 200 000 hectares, but in the past three years out of four it has managed to do only around 50 per cent of those burns. So far this season, however, CALM has managed to conduct prescribed burns for over 75 000 hectares. In response to this, I have asked the department to complete as much as possible of the prescribed burning program in the northern and central forest areas during November. CALM intends to complete the burning of another 20 000 hectares as long as conditions are suitable. Similarly, the burns will extend further south more into December as the conditions become right to burn. It is important to point out that this accelerated program may have an impact on the city. Smoke may well cause a haze effect over the city. Today seven fires have been lit in the Warren region and there is some risk that the smoke from those fires will cause haze over the city. The forecast is for a strong north-easterly change, and depending on the exact timing of that change, some impact may be felt in the city. Given the circumstances, I believe this is a matter of judgment, and it is a judgment I am happy to exercise.