

BUSHFIRE SEASON, PRESCRIBED BURNING

**1346. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for the Environment:**

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Kalgoorlie to order for the first time.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Summer, and the bushfire season that comes with it, is less than two weeks away. Last year's bushfire season in the south west of the State was acknowledged as the worst on record for 40 years. Will the minister please advise the status of prescribed burning?

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

I thank the member for some notice of this question. I also thank him for his interest in this issue; particular concerns about Collie have recently been raised with me. As I have said in this House on a number of occasions, this side of the House is very committed to a program of prescribed burning. We need to carry out prescribed burning to protect property and communities, and biodiversity and conservation values. For its land in the south west of the State, the Department of Conservation and Land Management has identified a program from September to January that covers 215 burns over 168 000 hectares. A separate program will be instituted in autumn. To date, the Department of Conservation and Land Management has completed 55 burns in the south west, totalling 51 000 hectares or so, and another 15 burns are partially complete; they will be completed as soon as there are favourable weather and fuel conditions, particularly favourable fuel conditions. The rain a fortnight ago caused some trouble in certain parts of the State, but for the area around Collie it was a godsend. When temperatures went up to 35 degrees and higher, burning in the Collie region and to the north had to be shut down for a period because of those unfavourable weather conditions. The rain has meant that burning can continue in that area. I am informed that fuel moisture levels in CALM's Warren region mean we are expecting to keep burning right up until Christmas and potentially into January. I believe there is strong community support for the prescribed burning program. Results of recent reviews have shown that it is definitely needed, and I am pleased that Western Australia has received a reasonable assessment in those reviews. At times there are issues about smoke coming over the metropolitan area, but I believe that can be managed. People have to put up with that smoke on some days, which is a result of prevention measures for the safety and the future of some communities that are exposed to this problem.