

PRESCRIBED BURNING, SOUTH WEST

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

Will the minister inform the house of the progress made in prescribed burning in the south west this season?

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

I thank the member for his question. To date, the Department of Conservation and Land Management has completed around 35 000 hectares of prescribed burning. However, I regret to inform the house that that is around 42 per cent below where we were at this time last year. The reason for that is that we have had one of the wettest winter and spring periods for 30 years, and that has meant that the number of days on which we can burn has been greatly reduced. For example, Manjimup recorded 26 rainy days in September compared with a mean of 17 wet days. Over the whole of the forested area, only four days were dry enough for burns to be conducted. In response, the Department of Conservation and Land Management has targeted its burns to areas that will provide maximum community protection. People have probably noticed some smoke around Mundaring, Kalamunda, Armadale, Jarrahdale and Dwellingup. The lack of suitable burning days has meant that CALM has had to run a bit closer to the wire in terms of smoke haze, particularly over the metropolitan area. The department has issued a number of smoke alerts when there has been a risk of haze over the metropolitan area. People can expect an increased number of smoke alerts as the department moves to pick up the program and get closer to its target for prescribed burns. Eight new fire officers have been employed to help undertake and plan prescribed burns. An additional 40 officers are directly involved in the burns. It is anticipated that around 90 000 hectares will be burnt by December. The target for the program, to the middle of next year, is for 200 000 hectares to be burnt. We have the resources, the people and the ability, but we are being hindered -

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** I thought you shifted them all up north.

**Dr J.M. EDWARDS:** No. We are being hindered by weather conditions. The burns will be targeted. However, I warn that there may be an increased level of smoke haze over the metropolitan area.