

ROSS RIVER VIRUS — SOUTH WEST

7157. Mr M.P. Murray to the Minister for Health

In regard to the Ross River Virus (RRV) disease risk in the Busselton, Capel and Bunbury districts in the South West, I ask;

- (a) how many cases of RRV have been recorded in the last 12 months in the Busselton, Capel and Bunbury districts;
- (b) has there been an increase in the reported cases in these districts over the past year and if so, what is the percentage of the increase;
- (c) what action has the Department of Health taken on the issue of RRV in the Busselton, Capel and Bunbury districts;
- (d) does the Department of Health fund any programs in relation to RRV, if so what is the program and how much is it funded for;
- (e) does the Department of Health liaise with local government and/or the Department of Environment and Conservation on the issue of RRV; and
 - (i) if yes, how are these departments involved and are there any proactive strategies they offer to the public; and
 - (ii) what is the cost of any services or programs on offer to the public and is that funding sourced from the Department of Health's budget; and
- (f) what is the total cost of services and programs on offer to the public?

Dr K.D. HAMES replied:

- (a) The number of cases of Ross River virus (RRV) disease recorded for the following locations in the last twelve months is as follows:
Capel = 45
Busselton = 38
Bunbury = 29
- (b) There has been an increase in cases of RRV disease reported to the Department of Health (DOH) in some areas of the South West over the last twelve months. The number of cases has:
— increased in Capel this year by 35%, compared to the long term average;
— decreased slightly in Busselton (-7%); and
— increased in Bunbury this year by 24%, compared to the long-term average.
- (c) The DOH has a state-wide management program that is closely integrated with Local Government, through the Contiguous Local Authorities Group (CLAG) funding scheme, to monitor and manage the risk of mosquito-borne diseases throughout Western Australia (WA).

Initiatives undertaken in the South West this season include:

- funding for 39 (to date) helicopter applications of mosquito larvicide (at DOH expense), carried out in collaboration with Local Governments, to reduce vector mosquito populations throughout the region;
- provision of 50% of the cost of mosquito larvicides to Local Governments through the CLAG funding scheme;
- provision of intensive (week-long) training in mosquito management to over 50 Local Government staff;
- funding for prospective surveillance (by The University of Western Australia (UWA) under contract to DOH) of known RRV carrier mosquito populations and their infection rate with RRV in high risk areas of the South West. This is used to inform public warnings and direct timing and location of mosquito management initiatives by Local Governments;
- issuing of four media statements to the public since October 2011, based on monitoring results, to warn residents and visitors to the South West to take additional precautions against mosquito bites. This has led to DOH staff participating in 32 media interviews with newspaper groups, TV and radio networks;

- collaboration with Local Government Environmental Health Officers to proactively follow up notified human cases of RRV, to identify high risk areas of RRV activity and assist in focusing timing and location of mosquito management activities;
 - attending public meetings and meetings of elected members of Local Governments to provide advice on mosquito management, current environmental conditions and treatment options and limitations;
 - provision of high level technical advice on all aspects of mosquito management to mosquito management personnel in Local Government; and
 - provision of advice to decision making agencies on land-use planning to manage mosquito-borne disease risk. The DOH has commented on 108 subdivision proposals across WA since November 2011, the majority from high risk areas for RRV in the South West.
- (d) The DOH funds a Mosquito-Borne Disease team of three full time staff to monitor and manage mosquito concerns across the State at a cost of approximately \$593,000.00 per annum. This will shortly be expanded with a fourth officer tasked with a specific role to assist Local Government develop effective mosquito management plans.
- The DOH state-wide surveillance program for mosquito-borne diseases (largely carried out under contract to UWA) costs approximately \$566,000.00 per year.
- The cost of the CLAG funding scheme for health-driven management of mosquitoes across WA (provision of larvicides and helicopter to Local Governments) for 2011–12 is estimated to be \$560,000.00, but this amount fluctuates substantially each year depending on prevailing environmental conditions and risk of activity of RRV and other diseases.
- (e) Yes.
- (i) See (c) above.
 - (ii) See (d) above.
- (f) The total annual cost for mosquito and mosquito-borne disease management services provided by the DOH to the WA community is approximately \$1,700,000.00. Note that this varies annually because the program is responsive to the environmental drivers of mosquito populations and mosquito-borne disease risk.