

BLUE KANGAROO PAW

Statement by Minister for Environment

MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldivis — Minister for Environment) [9.16 am]: Today I would like to inform the house of the development of the world-first blue kangaroo paw at Kings Park! Groundbreaking plant hybridisation research at Kings Park has produced the first-ever blue kangaroo paw for commercial release. The blue *Anigozanthos masquerade* kangaroo paw, is the result of over a decade of development by Kings Park plant breeders. Using standard crossbreeding techniques combined with high-level science, the Kings Park breeding program is the only one in the world focused on the environment and develops plants that use less water and fertiliser, have less disease and provide habitat and food for local fauna. Planting hardy Western Australian varieties like the Masquerade provides opportunities to build urban landscape resilience in the face of harsher, more volatile weather events driven by climate change. As well as the blue flower, the Kings Park breeding program now has a large range of new kangaroo paw hybrids in every colour of the rainbow. Many of these amazing colours will be released over the coming years. Kangaroo paws occur naturally only in WA, but are fast becoming a global crop for both ornamental pot plants and cut flowers. The blue Masquerade has just been officially launched here in WA, and plants are now becoming available in the eastern states. It is also due to be released this year in Europe and the United States, with further releases planned in other international territories in following years. From a single seed generated in 2017, by 2024 there will be millions of the blue kangaroo paw sold around the world. By owning the intellectual property, each plant sold generates a small royalty that is invested in further research at Kings Park. A global research collaboration has also been inspired by the development of the blue kangaroo paw.

A recently awarded Australian Research Council grant of nearly half a million dollars, supported by \$125 000 from the Friends of Kings Park, will map the first kangaroo paw genome using the state floral emblem—the traditional red-and-green kangaroo paw. An assembled genome for kangaroo paws will provide the foundational resource required to map the location of genes responsible for traits of interest for horticulture, including the blue colour. The unique and highly diverse Western Australian flora offers enormous opportunities for similar research projects to map the genomes of our other species to assist conservation and will lead to exciting new commercial outcomes in horticulture, essential oils and pharmaceuticals.

The SPEAKER: Minister, I am looking forward to the blue-and-gold kangaroo paw, and I have a name in mind for it!

Mr R.R. WHITBY: I have ordered a purple one to be developed immediately!