

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD — COTTON BUSH — WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ORGANISM LIST

5351. Mr M.P. Murray to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

- (1) Does the Minister support the Department of Agriculture and Food's preliminary recommendation – made in the initial stages of the review into cotton bush's declared pest status under the Western Australian Organism List (WAOL) – that cotton bush be removed from the declared pest list?
- (2) If cotton bush is removed from the declared pest list:
 - (a) does the Minister concede that Recognised Biosecurity Groups (RBGs) would be precluded from accessing declared pest rate funding and matching State Government contributions to address the presence of cotton bush in their communities;
 - (b) does the Minister concede that the Department of Agriculture and Food would have no authority to require landowners to manage the presence of cotton bush on their properties;
 - (c) does the Minister concede that cotton bush would be allowed to spread and entrench itself unchecked throughout already-affected areas and beyond;
 - (d) does the Minister concede that the Department of Agriculture and Food would no longer give any support to cotton bush mitigation activities through RBGs and the *Biosecurity and Agricultural Management Act 2007*;
 - (e) what supplementary funding will the State Government provide for RBGs to access for cotton bush management in lieu of declared pest rate funding and matching State Government contributions;
 - (f) will those landowners and local governments, which engaged in the process of developing and formalising RBGs for the primary purpose of combating cotton bush, be compensated by the State Government for their time and effort; and
 - (g) will inspections such as those described in the Department of Agriculture and Food media release dated 14 September 2014 'Cotton bush inspections part of community-led response to weed' still occur?
- (3) Is the Minister aware of the significant opposition from landholder and farming stakeholders to removing cotton bush from the declared pest list under the WAOL and their frustration at the lack of consultation and engagement as part of this process?
- (4) Will the Minister commit to not removing cotton bush from the declared pest list under the WAOL until in-depth consultation is undertaken with local stakeholders and strong scientific and statistical evidence supports any such move?

Mr D.C. Nalder replied:

- (1)–(2) I will consider the recommendations and advice received from the declaration review following full review processes, including technical assessment, Stakeholder Reference Group review and public consultation.
- (3) Yes.
- (4) Refer to part (1).