

LOCUSTS - AGRICULTURAL REGION

954. Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

No notice of this question has been given and it is in regard to locusts.

- (1) Is the minister satisfied that the locust outbreak developing in the Agricultural Region will be controlled?
- (2) Is there sufficient funding and manpower available to carry out the task?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

I thank Hon Murray Criddle for his question.

- (1) Yes, I am, and that is not based on blind faith. I am satisfied that we can achieve the level of control that we are setting out to achieve because I have been assured, as recently as two days ago, by the Department of Agriculture and Food that that is the case.
- (2) Yes. In the event that we find the campaign challenged by resources, such as the amount of chemical or human resources, we will find the chemical and human resources to meet the level of control. I am sure the honourable member will understand this, but a person reading the answer may not understand it: the degree of control that the Department of Agriculture and Food sets out to achieve equates to about only 70 per cent of the total possible flying mass. It is probably technically possible to go about 10 per cent better than that; that is, for approximately 80 per cent control, but the cost of gaining that additional 10 per cent of control would probably be uneconomic. Certainly, it would double or even treble the cost of the control that we have now. At a little over \$11 million from the state's part of the control, we can effectively control about 70 per cent or a little better of the flying biomass. We believe, and it is not belief based on theory but on experience, particularly the experience we gained from what became an award winning control procedure carried out by the honourable member's government in 2000, that we can achieve 70 per cent. We have learnt a lot from the 2000 campaign and that knowledge has been defined in subsequent smaller campaigns. I do have that confidence. We had that confidence shaken a little on day one of the spraying campaign when we had some difficulty with control of droplet size and the height at which the planes were operating. By the next day we thought we were over that, but there will always be little glitches. Little glitches aside, I can answer yes to both of those questions.