

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT, PRESCRIBED BURNING
PROGRAM

544. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for the Environment:

Will the minister outline the proposed prescribed burning operations by the Department of Conservation and Land Management this spring?

Dr J.M. EDWARDS replied:

I thank the member for this question. This issue is particularly pertinent around Collie. We undertake a big program of prescribed burning every spring, summer and autumn to make sure that we are protecting assets in the community, life and biodiversity values.

Mr P.D. Omodei: Is it because it does not burn in the winter?

Dr J.M. EDWARDS: In fact, we do burn in the winter. The member will have seen the complaints about smoke that we received in June when we were burning north of the city because it happened to be dry there. In line with our efforts to continually improve our management in this area, we have now released a three-year indicative master burn program. This has just been released for public comment. It is out there so that people can know of the burns that are planned over the next three years. We are planning 157 burns for this spring and early summer. We are aiming for a target over this burn season, including autumn next year, of around 200 000 hectares. We were fortunate in 2004-05 to achieve 213 000 hectares, so I believe that we are building on a good track record. The fires that occurred in the hills earlier this year demonstrated the value of prescribed burning. Although they received a lot of attention, CALM staff also attended 406 wildfires throughout the south west of the state. It is a great credit to CALM, the Fire and Emergency Services Authority and the local volunteer fire brigades that only 19 of those 400 fires burnt more than 100 hectares. I am delighted that we have put further new moneys into this area through CALM's budget this year. The new money this year goes specifically to employing extra people in the south west to both undertake prescribed burning and respond to wildfires. The maps and details of the three-year master burn plan and this season's proposed burns are now available at CALM offices and CALM work centres, and briefings will be carried out in local areas so that local people know what will be burnt and when.