

CANE TOADS — KIMBERLEY TOAD BUSTERS

464. Hon NIGEL HALLETT to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for the Environment:

- (1) What action is the state government taking to the recently discovered lungworm parasite *Rhabdias cf hylae*?
- (2) What assistance is the state government providing to Kimberley Toad Busters to conduct further studies and obtain permits to dissect selected native frogs?
- (3) What permits are required, if any, to toadbust in Western Australia on some or all of the following —
 - (a) private land;
 - (b) local-government-owned or managed land;
 - (c) crown land;
 - (d) waterways, river systems and wetlands;
 - (e) Department of Environment and Conservation managed non-national park lands; and
 - (f) national parks and nature reserves?

Hon SALLY TALBOT replied:

I thank Hon Nigel Hallett for some notice of this question, to which the minister provided the following answer —

- (1) Lungworms have been known to exist in cane toads for more than a decade and are common in established toad populations. In 2007 Professor Rick Shine from the University of Sydney proposed that if lungworms could be found in toads near the frontline, they could possibly be used to reduce the fitness of the toads and the rates of spread. In 2008, Professor Shine sought assistance from the Department of Environment and Conservation in determining whether toads in the Northern Territory near Western Australia have the parasite. This request was passed onto Kimberley Toad Busters, who did an excellent job finding heavily infested populations around the Victoria River in the Northern Territory. DEC is currently finalising an agreement with Professor Shine to further investigate the opportunities that the lungworm offers for fighting the spread of cane toads towards WA.
- (2) Since 2004-05, the state government has provided Kimberley Toad Busters with funding of \$494 225, of which \$433 225 has been provided in the current financial year. DEC has provided the Kimberley Toad Busters with copies of the necessary application forms for scientific research on native frogs, with the offer of assistance to complete. The department has also committed to processing the applications as a priority.
- (3) (a)-(d) No specific permit is required; however, permission from the landholder for access would be appropriate; and
(e)-(f) a scientific permit for research—regulation 4—licence would be required pursuant to the Conservation and Land Management Regulations 2002. The Kimberley Toad Busters were issued with such a licence on 18 April 2008, and this is valid until 17 April 2009.