

WALLABIES — CULLING

Hon BRUCE DONALDSON to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for the Environment:

I understand that a culling program of wallabies is occurring on North Island; that is, the Abrolhos Islands.

- (1) What process is being used to cull the wallabies?
- (2) Is 500 wallabies the number to be culled?
- (3) What are the reasons for the culling?
- (4) Does culling take place on an annual basis?
- (5) Who is responsible for undertaking and overseeing the culling?
- (6) Who authorises this culling?

Hon SALLY TALBOT replied:

I thank Hon Bruce Donaldson for some notice of this question. The minister has provided the following answer —

- (1) Since 2005 the Department of Environment and Conservation has implemented three strategies to reduce the grazing pressure of the introduced tammar wallaby population on North Island —
 - (i) a research program using sterilisation of females through hormonal implants that was completed in mid 2007;
 - (ii) the removal of approximately 60 animals to educational institutions for research purposes; and
 - (iii) the shooting of remaining animals.
- (2) Removal of all tammars from the island is necessary. The cull in the week of 4 February 2008 indicated that fewer than 25 animals remain on the island.
- (3) Five wallabies were introduced onto North Island in 1985 and the population reached more than 450 animals. The species was not found on the island previously. In 2003 the North Island community, through the Abrolhos Islands Management Advisory Committee, raised concerns with the department about the impact of overgrazing by the tammars. The cumulative impacts of grazing have led to the loss of vegetative cover and a severe decline of plant species that are the preferred food of the wallabies. Removal is necessary to ensure the regeneration of the vegetation of the island and the protection of species, such as the painted button-quail.
- (4) The culling takes place when no fishers are living on the island and will continue until all tammars have been removed.
- (5) The Department of Environment and Conservation oversees the culling of the wallabies on the island by a professional shooter.
- (6) The Department of Environment and Conservation and the Department of Fisheries.