

As the member is aware, and as I am sure was highlighted during the briefing that I arranged for him early this year, the department has a target for prescribed burning of around 200 000 hectares each year. Of course, a range of variables influence when those burns can take place, as the member has already highlighted in his grievance, and how they are engaged in. It is important to note that the weather conditions, such as prevailing winds, influence the decisions as to when prescribed burns can take place. The decisions are obviously collectively made from intelligence from local communities, input from local government, and various other sources, and a very clear and determined process is in place for when these prescribed burnings are undertaken.

Last year, as the member is probably aware, Western Australia had one of its driest winters, which impacted on the number of prescribed burns that could be carried out in the last season. Just under 140 000 hectares were burnt under the prescribed burning target for last year. The very low rainfall in WA in the winter of 2006, and a range of other prevailing weather conditions, impacted on the prescribed burning target of 200 000 hectares. Since 2003 the Department of Environment and Conservation has largely been able to achieve that 200 000-hectare burning target: in 2003, 192 000 hectares were burnt; in 2004-05, 213 000 hectares were burnt; in 2005-06, 194 000 hectares were burnt.

The prescribed burning program has a range of objectives. The first objective, obviously, is the protection of persons and property, and ensuring that whatever can be done about the matrix of prescribed burnings is done. That objective is a primary concern. The other objective is to protect the important biodiversity characteristics and values of WA's native vegetation, and to ensure that the prescribed burning regime will create areas where important biodiversity values are maintained.

As the fires earlier in the year in Toodyay and in the Peel region highlighted, the state government must ensure that all stakeholders understand the importance and responsibilities that the community has in ensuring and maximising the protection of property and, ultimately, and most importantly, lives.

Mr M.J. Cowper: Is there any edict about the Red Bull Air Race or -

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I have just had a note about the Red Bull Air Race. If the member had given me some notice of that question I would have been able to quantify -

Mr M.J. Cowper: Notice of it!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Notice of that question, because I would have liked to have answered it specifically, as the member has mentioned the Red Bull Air Race. There is no restriction for the next three weeks -

Mr M.J. Cowper: So those 15 burn programs are going to happen continuously?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: As I have already said, those burns will continue, depending upon the weather conditions.

Mr M.J. Cowper: But whereabouts, minister?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am happy to provide the member with the information. It has been proposed that restricted burning will not happen near Perth from 1 to 4 November because there would be smoke in the city. I am prepared to give the member a further briefing on the information that he has specifically asked for about the next period of burning.

Mr M.J. Cowper: I invite the minister up to Dwellingup in the beautiful -

The SPEAKER: Minister, take a seat. The member for Murray's grievance is over. The member for Kimberley.

CANE TOADS

Grievance

MRS C.A. MARTIN (Kimberley) [9.34 am]: I rise to grieve about a pesky little creature called *Bufo marinus* that has been around for 70 years. It started off in Queensland and is now beginning to invade -

Mr R.C. Kucera: Just like John Howard!

Several members interjected.

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: I am not allowed to say that!

Cane toads have been slowly making their way over to Western Australia and are now at the upper reaches of the Ord River tributaries, causing people quite a few problems. Cane toads are mean little critters which cannot be eaten by any other species of animal -

Several members interjected.

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: I am not talking about John Howard!

Crows flip them over on their back and go for the gut, which is fine, but the Kimberley does not have a lot of crows, and of course the cane toads are not heading down to South Australia! Cane toads are a real issue. Cane

toads have no use: every now and then a taxidermist might stuff one; I would like to see all cane toads stuffed, but it would be quite expensive. In Queensland they are used as souvenirs.

These pesky little critters have been around for about 70 years. They have no practical use. They were introduced to Australia at a time when people could do virtually whatever they wanted and introduced all sorts of feral species. Cane toads have got one up on the rabbits - they are actually better than rattlesnakes, as a matter of fact. It is hard to believe how rapidly they are breeding, and they are moving closer and closer to the Kimberley region.

In Kununurra there is a group called Kimberley Toadbusters, led by Lee Scott-Virtue. She is a wonderful woman who, like hundreds of people in Kununurra and thereabouts, does not want to sit on her hands and watch this horrible invasion of creepy crawlies. The Kimberley Toadbusters have been out toadbusting every weekend. The group started off with a handful of people four years ago, and now there are hundreds involved. One of the Community Development and Employment Program organisations runs a program for people to go out for the whole weekend and catch toads. These disgusting little creatures are euthanased in a freezer and then buried.

A couple of real issues have surfaced. I have a message here from Lee Scott-Virtue, which reads -

We are most grateful to have your support -

This is a message to Hon David Templeman -

and the support of the Premier and the Hon D Templeman in supporting the recent grants to the KTBs. The acknowledgement of their work . . .

The Hon Kim Chance has also been most supportive in assisting us with quarantine issues.

We would like to extend an invitation to any parliamentary member . . .

I asked them just to say on the government side, but they said any, so that is okay -

. . . to come on a KTB toad bust, any weekend . . .

The toad bust is a family activity, and they all go around killing toads. Do not bother bringing baseball bats or any of that, it is not allowed; the toads have to be euthanased.

I have also been asked by the Kimberley Toadbusters to deliver to Parliament this document, which is a chronology of what has happened in the past four years. This document is really interesting, because only the state government has helped this group -

Dr S.C. Thomas: Tell the truth! You have to be honest!

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: That is what it says. If the member wants to read it, he can; there is also one for the Minister for the Environment and Conversation. It is a good document.

One major problem in the fight against cane toads is cross-border issues. The last time I checked, cross-border issues were actually the responsibility of the federal government.

Several members interjected.

If members want to have a yarn, they should get on their feet. I have only got seven minutes, so get over it!

The most important issue I want to raise in this house is cross-border responsibility, which is not that of Western Australia or of the Northern Territory; it is the federal government's responsibility. What has the federal government done to assist WA to deal with this disgusting little critter? Members should see it; it reminds me of a couple of members I have noted on the opposition side! I am trying to be nice and to deliver my grievance nicely!

Organisations like the KTB must be provided with more funds. Can members imagine just sitting there, waiting to be invaded and doing nothing? These people go out every weekend; they commit their own time and resources simply because they feel helpless. The state government has assisted them - the minister is a legend; what can I say? - but the federal government, which has the real responsibility for cross-border issues, does nought. I mean nought, because the only things the federal government funds are in the capital city. It funds nothing up in the Kimberley. All we see is the people involved sitting there feeling helpless, wanting to stop the cane toad movement. People from Queensland who now live in Kununurra said, "Oh, you'll get used to it." No; we do not want to get used to it. For 70 years cane toads have been making their way over to Western Australia. When they are in our backyards in Perth, I will be really upset because we have enough creepy crawlies around without these disgusting little critters. What do they do? They spit in dog bowls and make dogs sick. People in the Kimberley love their dogs. Without their dogs they are not whole. These disgusting little critters spit in dog bowls and make dogs sick and then what do they do? They get into chook pens. Where would we be without eggs?

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mrs C.A. MARTIN: No; not the toilet. What happens? They bugger up the chooks! Cane toads are coming; they are eating all our insects and bugs. What about the native species, and when a snake eats a cane toad? Can members imagine life without snake or goanna on the menu? Come on! Once cane toads are here, they will destroy all the native species that I and people like me enjoy. I have to say to the minister that we hope he can actually put some pressure on where it is needed; namely, on the federal government to get it moving, because we need help.

The SPEAKER: Order! The document can lay on the table of the house for the balance of this day's sitting.

[The paper was tabled for the information of members.]

The SPEAKER: I remind members that the convention of this place is that grievances be heard without interjection. It appears that everyone in the place has forgotten that, including very senior members of this chamber who should know better. I warn people that from now on I will instruct the Acting Speakers who usually take grievances that that will be the rule.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah - Minister for the Environment) [9.41 am]: I thank the member for Kimberley for her grievance and for her ongoing passion and advocacy for her community, particularly regarding this menace, the cane toad. We have had a laugh, and when cane toad issues are raised it causes some mirth. Nonetheless, I think we all understand the seriousness of this threat to the biodiversity of our state, particularly in the Kimberley, which is the front-line threat area. I suppose also we face some very real threats if the cane toad is successful in entering the very important part the state that is the Kimberley - a unique part of our state and the world - which is very rich in biodiversity and in natural conservation values. This is a serious issue; it is an issue on which we need bipartisan support and certainly across-government support.

I acknowledge also the work the member for Kimberley has done as the local member. She has supported the Kimberley Toad Busters group for a long period and Lee Scott-Virtue and others who have joined the ongoing on-the-ground fight by locals and people whom they have, if we like, recruited as part of this fight. It is a very serious fight. As the member has already highlighted, the sorties they undertake every weekend across the border into the Northern Territory are very well coordinated and strongly focused on protecting the Kimberley. As the member has already said, they deserve our sincere gratitude for their efforts. However, they need to be sure that those who live in the south west and outside the Kimberley understand just how critical this fight is and that they will get the support they deserve from governments at all levels, including from the department for which I am responsible. It must, of course, be a coordinated response.

I am pleased we were able to announce recently funding of \$240 000, for which the member was very pleased to present a cheque towards the ongoing fight. The decision by this Carpenter government to ensure that we allocate another designated officer to work with and help the coordination of the effort on the ground is an important milestone. I acknowledge also the volunteers involved in the recent Great Toad Muster held by the Stop the Toad Foundation. The local community has responded brilliantly. We need to support the Kimberley Toad Busters, and this state government will continue to support their efforts in that area.

As the member said quite rightly, we need an understanding from the federal government that this is a cross-border issue, and one that the federal government needs to not only show leadership in, but also support the efforts of the local community and the state government. That is why I have been pressuring the current federal government to understand that we need to develop a toad strategy aimed at militating and working against the threat of cane toads to Western Australia. It also needs to continue the research to find a biological or genetic solution to this issue. That is why the Carpenter government, through the Premier, also announced recently, as part of our ongoing fight against the cane toad, that it would also provide \$500 000 towards the ongoing genetic fight, if we like, to find a solution to this problem. That money will go to assist the efforts of the Australian cane toad genome program led by Professor Grant Morahan. We need to contribute research dollars to ensure the result is multilayered and that we attack this insidious creature in a variety of ways. Let there be no doubt that the toad will get into the state at some stage in the future, and that will be a tragedy. However, we must do everything possible on the ground to prevent it and do the necessary research.

I want to highlight some other things. Since 2003-04 this government has invested more than \$11.8 million in the fight against the cane toad. We have put our dollars up-front for the community, for research and for coordinating a multilayered approach. Now we are saying to the federal government that it must come to the party because this threat is not a Western Australian threat. Research is showing that the cane toad is adapting to climate and that it is a threat to places like Sydney and places further south. It will be to the detriment of the current federal government if it allows the cane toad to march further south without a genuine federal government approach and without understanding the threat of this insidious creature. That is why I am pleased that Peter Garrett, the federal opposition spokesperson on environment and climate change, understands that. He has announced that if a Rudd government is elected, it will invest \$2 million in an overall across-government and across-state approach and take leadership on this issue. It is a very important forward-thinking initiative by the opposition spokesperson on the environment. Come 24 November when the Rudd government is elected, we

will have a federal environment minister who understands the importance of this issue and will act and work in cooperation with the state government, local governments and the magnificent volunteers the member for Kimberley mentioned. We look forward to that change. I am certain that the only way in which we could get the current federal environment minister to react would be if cane toads were marching into the seat of Wentworth. I thank the member for her grievance and I can assure her that we will continue the fight against this insidious creature.

FRANCHISE ARRANGEMENTS

Grievance

Mr P. PAPALIA (Peel) [9.49 am]: My grievance this morning is to the Premier and Minister for Federal-State Relations. I wish to speak on my concerns about the fairness of franchise arrangements. Recently I became aware of a situation in Rockingham - one of which I believe the member for Rockingham is also aware. It concerns the imminent closure of the local KFC outlet. This KFC outlet is one of the closest KFC branches to my electorate and it represents a convenient -

Dr S.C. Thomas: The previous member for Peel was always in there!

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, I try to avoid doing that, but it is very convenient to many of my constituents who enjoy the occasional KFC lunch or dinner. I understand that this KFC branch has operated successfully and has attracted a very good and loyal customer base. Indeed, I know that this branch has operated for more than two decades - even longer than I have been travelling to Garden Island. The Rockingham KFC outlet employs around 40 people, including some with nearly 20 years of service. I am advised that the workforce includes at least two people with disabilities and a veteran. In many ways, the branch represents a key part of the local landscape. It provides local jobs and quick and easy food for customers on the run in the surrounding area.

Competitive Foods Australia Pty Ltd has run the KFC franchise business for 38 years. However, the parent KFC brand has recently been purchased by Yum Restaurants International (Pty) Ltd - a multi-national company based in the United States of America. In an effort to take back the business, Yum International has recently notified Competitive Foods that it will not renew Western Australian KFC outlet licences as they fall due. In so doing, Yum International has offered to purchase Competitive Foods' 50 KFC outlets at a price that Competitive Foods claims does not recognise 38 years of goodwill and is therefore significantly below market value. I reiterate that the Rockingham business has been building goodwill for a number of decades. As a result of this assault on its business, Competitive Foods is left with little choice but to deny Yum International access to its lease sites in an effort to prevent the same tactic being employed against its entire stable of businesses. Competitive Foods intends to fight this with the only means at its disposal, and that is to shut down individual outlets as their franchise agreements fall due. The Rockingham agreement is the first of these in Western Australia to expire, on 19 November 2007, and this will lead to the loss of 40 jobs - a distressing outcome for 40 people.

However, this issue has wider implications. Franchise arrangements are increasingly popular, with many Western Australians who go into small business opting for the franchise path and seeing it as a more secure and supportive environment. Nationally, the franchise sector is currently turning over \$128 billion a year - a very good indication of how large and influential franchising is. It is one of the fastest growing sectors in the economy, with an impressive average growth rate of 17.4 per cent over the past four years. The franchising sector contributes some 14 per cent of Australia's gross domestic product and is a major employer in Australia, whether that be through providing part-time positions and casual work for students, or broader career opportunities. Franchising employs an astonishing 700 000 Australians in 72 000 workplaces, and is obviously growing year after year.

According to a recent survey conducted by Griffith University, in 2006 there were around 960 business format franchise systems in Australia, representing an increase of 13 per cent since 2004. Western Australia is the perfect business environment in which to run and grow a franchise. We have an excellent economy and a growing population with more discretionary dollars to spend. Because Western Australians are busier, older and have more money in their pockets to spend, businesses that now do what people once did for themselves are thriving. This trend is evident in the range of franchises that are proving most popular today, including those in retail; property and business services; retail trade; food; and personal and business services. In addition, fitness centres, coffee shops, home cleaning and maintenance businesses are all experiencing good growth, with many of these businesses run as family businesses. I know from Small Business Development Corporation figures that franchises are popular with business migrants. I can also speak from personal experience. When my wife and I first considered embarking on running a small business, we considered very deeply a number of different franchise options, although we did not follow that path. This point is also illustrated by an encounter I had on the weekend at the World's Biggest Barbecue at Secret Harbour. An old Navy colleague, Darren Dyball, introduced me to a younger Navy man by the name of Scott Gallon. In preparing to leave the service, Scott and his wife, Rebecca, have purchased two Muffin Break franchise outlets. They are great examples of novice entrepreneurs who choose franchising as a safer means of entering the small business sector.