

COMMITTEE REPORTS - CONSIDERATION

Committee

The Chairman of Committees (Hon George Cash) in the chair.

Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission - First Report - Annual Report 2004-05 - Motion

Resumed from 10 November 2005 on the following motion moved by Hon Ray Halligan -

That the report be noted.

Question put and passed.

Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission - Second Report - Correspondence from Mr Kevin Hammond, Commissioner of the Corruption and Crime Commission, and Mr Malcolm McCusker, QC, Parliamentary Inspector - Motion

Resumed from 10 November 2005 on the following motion moved by Hon Ray Halligan -

That the report be noted.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I remind members that this report contains matters of ongoing investigation. I therefore invite members to have regard for those issues that could be raised in light of that. If members want to debate this matter after, for instance, order of the day 170, while having regard to the content of that correspondence, I will entertain a motion to that effect.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: I think the investigation is now before the court.

The CHAIRMAN: It is now sub judice, so members must be careful about which issues they raise.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: The report I will quote from is now a public document. I will not depart from any information within the report. More recently elected members, and even some members who have been here for some time, may not understand exactly what the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission is expected to do. It is one of the new joint standing committees; nonetheless, it is an important one. The report reads -

On 31 May 2005 the Legislative Council concurred with a resolution of the Legislative Assembly to establish the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission.

The Joint Standing Committee's functions and powers are defined in the Legislative Assembly's Standing Orders 289-293 and other Assembly Standing Orders relating to standing and select committees, as far as they can be applied. Certain standing orders of the Legislative Council also apply.

It is the function of the Joint Standing Committee to -

- (a) monitor and report to Parliament on the exercise of the functions of the Corruption and Crime Commission and the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission;
- (b) inquire into, and report to Parliament on the means by which corruption prevention practices may be enhanced within the public sector; and
- (c) carry out any other functions conferred on the Committee under the *Corruption and Crime Commission Act 2003*.

The Committee consists of four members, two from the Legislative Assembly and two from the Legislative Council.

The report refers to members who were on the committee when the report was written. The report was to provide both houses of Parliament with information presented to the committee. It is an important committee that should report to Parliament as often as possible. Corruption and crime within the public sector is something that people find abhorrent. They want to see that checks and balances are in place to ensure that offenders are caught by the legislation passed by this Parliament. The Corruption and Crime Commission was established to replace the Anti-Corruption Commission, which, as I have been told and as I am sure others know, did not operate very well because of inadequacies in the legislation. The ineffectiveness of the ACC had nothing to do with the individuals assigned to operate it. That can be debated on another day.

The report tabled on 30 August is now a public document. It refers to what was then an ongoing inquiry into the actions of the then Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Council, Laurie Marquet; and Moira Rayner, who was then assistant to Kevin Hammond, the commissioner. The report is there for any member to

read. It was provided, not as an ongoing accumulation of evidence so that the committee could make a decision on the issues before it - that was not the role of the committee - but purely to inform the committee of what had occurred at a given time. Rather than try to explain what had occurred, the commissioner believed it far better to respond by providing copies of letters that were either written or received by him. The purpose of the committee, in receiving this sort of documentation, was to convince itself that the commission and the parliamentary inspector were undertaking their duties in the manner in which Parliament expected. The report, of itself, is not conclusive in any regard whatsoever; it is purely some information that the commissioner believed needed to be brought to the attention of the committee. The parliamentary inspector also felt the need to provide some information. This came about, as any member who reads the first letter from the commissioner will see, because of items that had appeared in *The West Australian*. The commission, through the commissioner and the parliamentary inspector, was responding to what the commissioner and the parliamentary inspector had read in *The West Australian*. It mattered not whether the items were statements, accusations, innuendo or whatever; they continued. In more recent articles, which I will not go into, *The West Australian* has again made accusations, unfounded or otherwise, which have been brought to the attention of the general public through that newspaper and which it is incumbent on the commission to investigate.

Members of the committee, in turn, feel that it is incumbent upon them to ensure that the commission has undertaken that task, and the way in which they do that is through the parliamentary inspector. That is the reason those letters were presented to Parliament on 30 August 2005. The letters contained information that was available at a given time, and they were received by the committee set up by Parliament to answer to Parliament and to provide information that the committee had at that date. Nothing more can be read into that report other than what is written in the letters. No conclusions are drawn; they are statements of facts. They were provided to both houses of Parliament for information only. As the Chairman of Committees has said, this is an ongoing matter. In asking that this report be noted, there certainly is no need to go any further than I have gone. Members may very well ask whether the committee has reported on this issue since the second report was finalised. The answer is no, not at this time because, as has been said, the matter is sub judice. Neither the committee nor the commission is sitting in judgment; it will be for the courts to decide.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: I will comment briefly on this report. I am mindful of the comments that the Chairman of Committees made at the beginning of the discussion on this motion. It is worth noting one of the aspects of the media commentary concerning the genesis of the report. I will focus on that one aspect which, fortunately, is a little tangential. During the media commentary of this matter, a criticism was levelled at the processes of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission and the part it played in the appointment of the Acting Commissioner of the CCC, Moira Rayner. Parliament was first advised of the appointment of the acting commissioner in the commission's first annual report in 2003-04. At paragraph 4.7 on page 12 of the report under the heading "Appointment of Acting Commissioner" is a very brief summary of the acting commissioner's curriculum vitae, which outlines some of the conspicuous positions Ms Rayner held prior to her appointment as the acting commissioner, including -

. . . Chair of the WA Law Reform Commission, Commissioner for Equal Opportunity in Victoria and Hearings Commissioner of the Commonwealth Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. In 2000, Ms Rayner was appointed as the first Director of the Office of Children's Rights Commissioner for London. She was also Acting Commissioner for Equal Opportunity in Western Australia in 2002 and a Commissioner of the Anti-Corruption Commission in its final 18 months of operation.

That is a thumbnail sketch of her qualifications. She was duly appointed to the position of acting commissioner. I point out for new members who are interested in the CCC that the commissioner was obviously mindful that he was presenting the commission's first annual report, because on page 1 he provides a very good thumbnail sketch of the role of the CCC. I recommend that members read it.

The point I will make concerns the role of the standing committee in appointing commissioners and acting commissioners to the CCC. Those provisions are clearly set out in the Corruption and Crime Commission Act. The role of the committee is clearly outlined in the act. Section 9 of the act refers to the Corruption and Crime Commissioner. Section 9(3a) states -

Except in the case of the first appointment, -

This was not the first appointment, because Commissioner Hammond was the first appointment -

the Premier is to recommend the appointment of a person -

(a) whose name is on a list of 3 persons eligible for appointment -

The act discusses eligibility for appointment at section 10 -

that is submitted to the Premier by the nominating committee; . . .

In the first instance, the nominating committee recommends three people to the Premier. The Premier then advises the standing committee of who the candidate is - not the three candidates. The candidate should have the majority support of the nominating committee. The standing committee can accept or reject the candidate. That is the choice that the standing committee has. From having been a member of the committee, my understanding is that that is the beginning and end of the matter. That is the role of the standing committee in the appointment. The circumstances of appointments and the functions of the Corruption and Crime Commissioner are set out in the act.

In my view, the standing committee has an important but limited role in the appointment of commissioners and acting commissioners. It is clearly set out that there will be a nominating committee, which obviously plays a very critical role. That committee forwards the names of its preferred candidates to the Premier, who then plays an important role. Part of the Premier's role is to advise the committee of the preferred candidate. I refer members again to the annual report and the reference to the appointment of the acting commissioner. In fairness, it would have been very difficult, even extraordinary, under those circumstances, and being mindful of the curriculum vitae of that particular applicant, for the standing committee to have done anything other than what it did.

Hon Barbara Scott interjected.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: No. There was criticism of it in the media last year. I make reference to that. It is the only point I want to pick up on; that is, the media commentary. There was criticism of the standing committee because it was suggested that the standing committee had not performed its duties properly. I reject that. In all fairness, the standing committee performed its duties properly in the role that it played in the appointment of the acting commissioner. I draw that to the attention of members. The role of the committee is important but it is limited. In my honest assessment of all the circumstances, I cannot see how a person could fairly or reasonably level criticism at the committee for the role it played.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: I will respond to Hon Graham Giffard, and I thank him for his words. He is correct that a lot is not understood about the process. Therein lies the difficulty in the appointment of the commissioner and the assistant commissioner. As Hon Graham Giffard has said, another committee, a nominating committee, decided whose name was to be put forward as the successful applicant for the position of assistant commissioner. It was always believed by the committee that it had the right of veto, as Hon Graham Giffard has already said: we either accepted or rejected it. Before making that decision, the committee wanted not just to see the curriculum vitae of the individual being put forward, but also to interview and question that individual about certain aspects of the work to be undertaken. That would have made us feel comfortable. The previous Premier, probably as a result of advice given to him, felt that there was no need for the committee to interview that assistant commissioner. The committee suggested to the then Premier that his advice was incorrect and that the committee had not only the right, but also the authority to insist that that individual be interviewed. To the then Premier's credit, he reviewed his decision and agreed that the committee should be placed in that position. I expect when future appointments are made that the committee will be placed in exactly the same position; that is, although the number of nominees will be reduced, the committee will still have the opportunity to talk to the nominated person, and not just look at his or her CV. Therefore, the committee will be placed in a far better position that will enable it to be comfortable with the appointment.

Question put and passed.

Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs - First Report - A Petition into Preventing the Entry and Establishment of Cane Toads in Western Australia

Resumed from 15 September 2005.

Motion

Hon BRUCE DONALDSON: I move -

That the report be noted.

Many of us will be well aware of the media attention that has been given to the problem of cane toads that Western Australia is now facing. They are a native of North America and central and South America. They are found in the United States. They were introduced to Queensland to stop a beetle that was creating havoc in the sugarcane industry; therefore, it is an introduced species. Queensland has been doing quite a bit of work in the field of biological control. Apparently, after a time, the cane toads create havoc with the other wildlife - this would happen if they got into Western Australia - and the mortality rate of a lot of the would-be predators of cane toads is high. After a number of years, the remaining wildlife builds an immunity to the poison that the

cane toads have in their bodies. The worst part is that a female cane toad normally produces between 25 000 and 30 000 eggs at a time. Native frogs produce a few hundred eggs, which turn into tadpoles. Cane toads breed at least twice a year. It is estimated that a single female can produce up to 100 000 cane toads a year, which is quite astounding. In normal circumstances, the vast majority of those eggs do not mature into adult cane toads. However, cane toads have a phenomenal breeding capacity.

There was also an article in one of the newspapers about a Dettol-led recovery. The article suggested that the defence forces camping near Darwin often go out at night and use a Dettol mixture in a squeeze bottle to catch quite a lot of cane toads. The powers-that-be believe that it is not very humane, and the worst part is that they could also be spraying native frogs in their haste to get rid of the cane toads. Cane toads are on the march into Western Australia, and the government, to its credit, has put a lot of money into these programs to stop them coming. That is very difficult to achieve. They were hoping for another “dry” wet season in the north, but it has not happened. They now find that cane toads are probably within 50 kilometres of the border. The quarantine station’s surveillance has been heightened, simply because of the number of cane toads that hitchhike on travellers’ caravans or vehicles. They are being found at rest stops. There has been a lot of conjecture over what should be done with them. People have talked about using golf clubs and hockey sticks and so forth, which is not very humane. Many interesting suggestions were made that we did not include in the report.

In Kakadu, cane toads have had a huge effect upon the mortality rate of freshwater crocodiles. That was pointed out by the acting director of nature conservation in the Department of Conservation and Land Management, Mr Gordon Wyre, when he briefed the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. This is despite the fact that one-third of the Kakadu area is burnt every year. Cane toads have been seen in Victoria River, and they have been on the march ever since. There are government-funded trapping programs and a community foundation to which the government has contributed some money. Luc Longley and other high-profile people have also been involved.

It will be difficult to handle a cane toad incursion into Western Australia. It will simply be a catastrophe for our native wildlife. People may say that we have too many crocodiles and we need a culling, but we hardly need them to be culled through cane toad poisoning. It was very interesting to hear Mr Gordon Wyre talk about some of the efforts that have been made to try to stop the invasion of cane toads into Western Australia. It would be naive of anybody to suggest that we could achieve 100 per cent success, but the greatest likelihood of early minimisation of cane toad numbers would be through biological control. Queensland has done a lot of work in that area. The federal government has announced \$3 million in funding, on top of its initial \$600 000 to match some of the state governments’ funding. It was short of what it originally committed to, but at least it ultimately decided to work with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation to try to come up with some form of biological control. That may prove successful. It is a worry, and it is hoped that some control can be found in the short term. I imagine it would be something like the calicivirus, which helped with the eradication of rabbits. Cane toads are a more serious threat simply because they carry poison in their bodies and in their eggs. The potential toxic power of these little creatures is amazing.

The committee asked how cane toads should be treated when they are found by travellers. All sorts of things were suggested. The humane way, apparently, is to put them in a plastic bag and then into the deep-freeze in the caravan. Apparently toads become comatose in the freezer, and people can get rid of them at a later date without incinerating them or something like that. We had to smile when we heard that suggestion. Can members imagine travellers having to throw out meat or fish from their caravan’s small freezer compartment to make room for cane toads? They could end up with a deep-freeze full of cane toads.

Hon Kate Doust: They are great as stuffed paperweights and could be flogged off to businesspeople.

Hon BRUCE DONALDSON: I am sure that Hon Kate Doust will expand further on that suggestion.

To its credit, the government has committed a great deal of money to the eradication of cane toads. I know that some committed community members are considering different ways of dealing with the problem. One method on its own will not be successful. However, a combination of methods may mean that we can slow the number of advancing cane toads. The worrying concern is the cane toads’ ability to breed. The committee was most intrigued about that. We were going to travel up north, but we ran out of time. The report includes the work that has been going on and the information that has been flowing into the wider community.

Hon KEN BASTON: Recently when I was in Kununurra to attend a zone council meeting, I was fortunate enough to also attend a Stop The Toad Foundation presentation. Having seen that presentation, I believe that the \$500 000 allocated to the foundation is well worthwhile, particularly from two aspects. I noticed that questions were asked in the committee report about whether there was a doubling up because \$500 000 was allocated to both the promotion of this issue and the Stop The Toad Foundation even though the foundation and those promoting the issue are doing the same job. The \$500 000 for the Stop The Toad Foundation is very much

focused on volunteer involvement, including the trapping of cane toads. A momentum has built up and many volunteers are now participating in the program. The vastness of the area up north means that we need the help of as many people as possible.

In the 2005-06 budget, \$900 000 was allocated - I am sure that the minister will correct me if I am wrong - to the Department of Agriculture. The responsibility for this issue then moved from the Department of Agriculture to the Department of Conservation and Land Management. When I was in Kununurra the other day, I was told that there had been a delay of six months because of this shift. That delay is unfortunate, because we could have been acting on the problem in that time. I question the decision to give CALM responsibility for this matter, even though I understand that cane toads are considered a threat to our biodiversity rather than to our agricultural crops and stock. However, one can still argue that issue. I would have preferred that responsibility for this issue remain with the Department of Agriculture.

Hon Kim Chance: I do not think the delay was a result of the institutional arrangements; I think it was the start-up time to get the program under way. Indeed, traps had to be acquired and people had to be hired. I think that is probably the reason.

Hon KEN BASTON: Basically I commend the report. The cane toad problem is huge. Indeed, not only is money required for their eradication, but also there must be a public perception about the problem. That public perception has been created and people are volunteering and getting behind the issue. The report refers to the biological control program and suggests that adequate funding is needed for research. That is probably the answer to the cane toad problem. Obviously, we do not want to introduce a species to eradicate cane toads if that species ends up being a worse problem than the cane toad. That is what tends to happen; indeed, that is how we ended up with cane toads.

Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE: This is one of the most important issues that face Western Australia, both from the environmental point of view and from the point of view of our ability to produce a whole range of agricultural and other commodities. My mind goes to starlings, which I talked about yesterday, and also Johnes' disease, and so it goes on, with other pests and diseases coming into Western Australia, which by and large is free of the most serious. I do not want to go into blue tongue, footrot, which is another major disease that has come to worry us, and some of the other more serious diseases and the impacts that they could have in Western Australia. Hon Ken Baston made the point about research. Research is the one way in which we will be able to keep on top of the spread of some of the diseases that are coming into the state. Research also helps with breeding to increase productivity. The minister will certainly know the value of our research. The government has moved away from it over a period of time. The Department of Agriculture used to be involved in wheat programs and so forth. To some extent it still is, but private enterprise is being allowed to take over the department's role. I still think that the government has a role in checking the product. There needs to be a balancing act with the way in which private enterprise sometimes goes about it. I would be the first to agree that private development is the best way to go, but there need to be checks and balances on how programs are progressing, certainly when it comes to agriculture, to see that standards are maintained throughout the industry. We need to have a very good look at that aspect.

Cane toads are approaching from the north, so I welcome the work done by the committee. Its recommendations are pretty sound. How the state government will explore some of the means of preventing the cane toads' entry into the state is of interest to me. There should be no question about whether the government will continue to explore those means. What worries me are the outcomes - how soon they will be achieved and the time constraints that need to be placed on them, because the movement of cane toads is rapidly gaining on the state, and we are not making the ground that we should do. Some of this work should start very early in the process rather than later on. Cane toads have been approaching for a long time. Although the community in the north west is trying to prevent the invasion, I think cane toads are 100 kilometres or maybe more from the state's boundaries.

Hon Kim Chance: They were 130 kilometres away from the border the last time I heard.

Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE: The threat is certainly creeping very close. Having travelled across the Nullarbor not so long ago and seen how green it was, I am sure that some diseases and pests will get into the state sooner rather than later. I do not mind the rain, but the state does not want the pests.

One of the committee recommendations is to ensure adequate resourcing by the government. We need to understand how important these issues are. If we can nip the threat in the bud and stop cane toads from getting here, obviously we will have a longer time frame in which to act, which will be of great benefit to the state. When we talk about managing the environmental, social, cultural and economic impacts of the entry and establishment of cane toads, obviously we need to keep on top of the problem for as long as we possibly can. If cane toads are about to invade the north west of the state, we need to be making decisions now about how we

Chairman; Hon Ray Halligan; Hon Graham Giffard; Hon Ken Baston; Hon Murray Criddle; Hon Norman Moore; Hon Kim Chance

will contain them there. Some people have said that cane toads might well be in the south of the state now. I hope that is not a fact and that the invasion has not got here yet. I do not want it to happen, for obvious reasons. The longer we can keep the invasion contained in the north of the state and in the Northern Territory, as it happens to be now, the better it will be for the state's industry.

Another recommendation is that as a matter of priority we must ensure that key biodiversity assets are identified and protected from the devastating effects of the establishment of the cane toad. That goes without saying. We need to make sure that we do that. I agree with Hon Bruce Donaldson that biological control may well be the answer to the cane toad issue. It may also be the answer to a number of other issues. I would like to hear how those developments are progressing. It may be possible for the minister to find out and give us a report on this issue. It would be very interesting to learn of the progress being made. All members of the community must recognise that we need to do the work to maintain the clean, green image of Western Australia with regard to pests and diseases. That image stands us in good stead when we are marketing our products. I highly recommend to the government that it expend the money that is required to maintain that image, particularly with regard to cane toads, but also with regard to some of the other diseases that are heading our way, and in some cases are already here. We need to do everything we can to prevent the spread of cane toads in Western Australia.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: Like Hon Ken Baston, I was fortunate to be in Kununurra recently for the local government zone conference. At that conference, a scientist from Darwin gave us a briefing about cane toads. I came away from that meeting more concerned than I had been previously, particularly in respect of the front for the cane toads, which I think is now only 140 or 150 kilometres from Western Australia. He made the point that that is the front. However, as Hon Bruce Donaldson pointed out, cane toads are hitchhikers. That scientist gave us some graphic evidence of how cane toads can attach themselves to motor vehicles and be transported well ahead of the front. He said that he believed it was not out of the question that cane toads would be in Western Australia come the next wet season. That is a serious issue. I do not know whether we have done enough on this matter. Recently I read a letter sent to *The Kimberley Echo* from a resident of Queensland, who wrote, "We have to learn how to live with them; and I have". That is not the solution. We should not have to learn how to live with cane toads. They are horrendous creatures and should be eliminated - and whoever created them in the first place should go back to the drawing board!

I think a great deal of adhocery is attached to the way in which this matter is being handled. I hope the minister will tell me I am wrong. The federal government is providing some funding, and \$70 000 was provided at that particular weekend in Kununurra. Many people are doing extraordinary things voluntarily. There has been some argument about whether the funding that has been made available is going to the right people and is being used properly. This is a serious issue. Once cane toads get into the east Kimberley, it will not be long before they get into the west Kimberley, and potentially then the Pilbara and the south west. We cannot under any circumstances accept the notion that we have to learn how to live with these creatures. I look forward to hearing the minister tell us what he plans to do about this matter, albeit that ministers are always expected to solve the insoluble. There must be an answer to this problem, and if it takes money, time and expertise, then we need to find all of those.

Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE: Another pest that is out of control in Western Australia is rabbits. We have tried to control rabbits with *calici*, *myxoma* and many other things, but they are out of control. Rabbits cause huge damage to the environment. I do not care what anyone says; they destroy trees and pasture and so forth. That is the sort of thing we will be confronting if cane toads come into this state. Cane toads will threaten the environment even more, because they are a poisonous beast. Although we are heading in the direction of one solution, we need to consider a number of solutions, as we have done with the rabbit plague, because even 1080 is being attacked these days by people who do not want that pesticide to be used. We need to take a broader look at all the options available for overcoming this pest.

Hon GIZ WATSON: I will comment only briefly on this report because I was not part of the inquiry. The Greens (WA) have taken a very active role in raising the issue of the potential invasion of cane toads in the north of Western Australia, particularly my former colleague Hon Robin Chapple. He worked very closely with the community in Kununurra and other parts of the Kimberley to bring this issue to the attention of Parliament. The community is to be congratulated for having responded very passionately to information about the threat of cane toads coming across the border. It is rather fascinating that the border is seen as the point at which we suddenly become active, because many people have known about the advance of cane toads across the north of Australia for a very long time, particularly in environmental circles, and have consistently and regularly tried to raise more funds to arrest the movement of the toads. I acknowledge absolutely that that is a very difficult thing to do, but we should make some comment about the fact that Queensland and the Northern Territory have not done enough to stop the toads before they came as close to Western Australia as they are now. I acknowledge work being

done by the Stop The Toad Foundation, and I am particularly aware of the community work being done in Kununurra. I have had a briefing on that from the Stop The Toad Foundation itself. Its members are doing an extraordinary amount of work in their own time and at their own expense, although they are receiving assistance with the cost of petrol, which is an important part of the government's contribution.

Invasive species, whether they be weeds, amphibians or birds - as we were recently reminded with the sighting of starlings in the south west of the state - are an enormous problem in this state. As a result of its isolation, Western Australia has a unique set of ecosystems and an extraordinary biodiversity of plants and animals, and we are responsible for managing this environment and protecting it from invasive species and other impacts. However, we know that the history of invasive species in Western Australia has been appalling, whether it be about camels, goats or rabbits. The list is quite long. We should also not forget the impact of introduced marine species, which have the potential to be enormously damaging to the marine ecosystems, often being introduced in ballast water or attached to hulls of vessels. The task of preventing invasive species from coming into Western Australia is hugely challenging, not least because of the geography and the distances involved, small populations, and the incredible vulnerability of native species because they have evolved almost in the same way as species on islands, given that the south west is isolated by climatic conditions from the rest of the country.

I appreciate the time taken by the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs to look into this matter. I urge the government to redouble its efforts. Another member made the comment that, although the strategy of trying to knock the cane toads off wherever they encroach must be pursued, there are other aspects of the management issues that must also be undertaken if we are to either stop them or, at the very least, to minimise their impact.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Noting the time, Mr Chairman, I will not be able to finish my contribution, because issues that have been raised during deliberation of this report call for an update. I think some members have directly called for an update on where we sit with this program. I will be happy to update that information next Thursday, when I finish my contribution.

However, I wish to mention a couple of matters. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition's criticism about there being a degree of ad hockery in the cane toad program. It was necessarily so. We acted very quickly. One of the unified processes that did occur at a very early stage was the discussion held and agreement formed between me and my opposite number, Dr Chris Burns, Minister for Agriculture and Conservation in the Northern Territory government, at that time. Placing this spatially rather than temporally, the cane toad line was still east of Darwin when that agreement was formed. The fact that we have been able to work on the Victoria River site inside the Northern Territory jurisdiction since that time is as a result of that pre-emptive strike, because we could clearly see that it would be necessary for us to try to protect the area in western Northern Territory in order to slow the approach of cane toads to Western Australia. That process involved at least two governments, because the commonwealth was very late coming to the party - we did ask the commonwealth for matching funds, but in the end all it did was divert some national heritage trust money across to that program. However, the commonwealth has since indicated that it is ready to look at some long-term strategies, including biological control, which I think is absolutely necessary. That is probably the right role for the commonwealth, anyway.

The involvement of civilians on the ground has been mentioned a couple of times and that is really the high point of this campaign. That, allied with the educative component of the first tranche of money that was referred to by other speakers as \$0.5 million in the promotional area, has been an important part. Supporting the volunteer organisations on the ground has also been very important. Essentially, the program has three tranches: support for the volunteers, the promotional issue and the on-the-ground work at Victoria River allied with the Northern Territory government.

I have a couple of minutes left. Hon Giz Watson reported that Western Australia's history in terms of invasive species is appalling. I probably agree with her there as well, but I want to put that in context. In the 200 years or thereabouts since European habitation of the western side of the continent, Western Australia has managed to import something like 1 200 invasive species, either diseases, weeds or animal pests. On its own that sounds bad enough, and I suppose that is enough reason for Hon Giz Watson to call our performance appalling, but Australia has 2 200 invasive species. So we have held 1 000 invasive species at bay on the WA border, one of those being the cane toad. However, worldwide, invasive species or pests to the environment and to agriculture number 22 000. All of these numbers are estimates, but 22 000 is the number of potentially invasive species that still exist out there in the world, of which number we have only 1 200. Every member who spoke gave this message. That is why biosecurity is so important. Some one-third of the Department of Agriculture's budget is now devoted to biosecurity and, hopefully, the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Bill will be before us later this year.

Extract from *Hansard*

[COUNCIL - Thursday, 16 March 2006]

p583b-590a

Chairman; Hon Ray Halligan; Hon Graham Giffard; Hon Ken Baston; Hon Murray Criddle; Hon Norman Moore; Hon Kim Chance

Progress reported and leave granted to sit again, pursuant to standing orders.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm