

COTTON BUSH CONTROL

1004. Hon DARREN WEST to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

Mr President, significantly, this is question C1000—we have had 1 000 questions without notice.

I refer to the epidemic of cotton bush and other declared weeds along the Darling Scarp.

- (1) Have any local government authorities approached the minister requesting delegated authority to infringe landowners who allow cotton bush to grow uncontrolled; and, if so, which LGAs, and when?
- (2) Will the minister take action to give local governments the power to infringe such landowners; and, if not, why not?
- (3) Why is the Department of Agriculture and Food WA apparently unwilling to consider delegating to local government responsibility for infringement?
- (4) If the minister will not delegate authority, can he guarantee that DAFWA officers will diligently prosecute landowners who allow cotton bush and other declared weeds to grow uncontrolled; and, if he will not delegate, why not?

Hon KEN BASTON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question.

- (1) Local government authorities have approached the Department of Agriculture and Food WA about control of cotton bush under a pest plant local law. This option was raised at meetings initiated by local government authorities in 2013, in Dardanup in May, Harvey in June and Pinjarra in November.
- (2) A pest plant local law is initiated by the local government authority for its specific area for any weed that is not declared under the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007. To enable this to occur for cotton bush, this weed would need to be removed from the declared plants list under the BAM act. If cotton bush were to be removed from the declared plants list, the powers available under the BAM act would not be available for its control. DAFWA is liaising with LGAs to develop capacity and shared responsibility for control of cotton bush under the BAM act.
- (3) DAFWA has recommended that cotton bush remain a declared plant under the BAM act while there is community interest in its control. The basis for this recommendation is that the powers available for control under the BAM act are more effective than those available under a pest plant local law. DAFWA is liaising with LGAs to develop a shared responsibility for control of cotton bush under the BAM act as one part of a community coordinated approach.
- (4) DAFWA will undertake a regulatory role for widespread and established weeds where it is feasible and effective to do so. Compliance can be effective as one part of a community coordinated approach.