

ESPERANCE BUSHFIRES — WIND EROSION

1328. Hon SALLY TALBOT to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

- (1) Is the minister aware of concerns about the wind erosion implications for farmers following the recent catastrophic bushfires in Esperance?
- (2) How many employees of the Department of Agriculture and Food have expertise in this area, and of these how many work in the Esperance region?
- (3) What is their advice to the minister about managing wind erosion in areas affected by the fires?
- (4) What measures has the minister already put in place?
- (5) What measures are planned and when will they be put in place?
- (6) How much money has been put aside to pay for these measures?

Hon KEN BASTON replied:

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

- (1) Yes, I am.
- (2) There are 15 staff in total across DAFWA who have expertise in the areas of soil management, soil mapping and modelling. Four of these staff members are based in Esperance.
- (3) DAFWA has an information package on its website about managing soil erosion following fire. Key points are to remove livestock and prevent them from returning—they can be put into a confinement feeding area, an unburnt paddock or agisted; minimise vehicle traffic; to protect highly susceptible and valuable areas, such as gateways, laneways, yards, surrounds of houses and sheds with binding spray, claying, gravel, old hay or straw to give a full cover; to leave burnt residue on roadsides, revegetation and bush areas, which will decrease the risk of wind erosion; and if clearing is necessary, it can be left until after the break of season.
- (4) Measures put in place include the post-fire wind erosion package on the DAFWA website. Staff have created wind erosion hazard maps of the affected area. Esperance staff are working with industry partners and commercial agronomists to advise on best practice management of burnt paddocks. Exploration of hydro-mulching and other mitigation techniques are being investigated for stabilisation of high priority areas.
- (5) The Esperance office advises that overnight it rained over the fireground. DAFWA experts advise that this will likely form a protective seal on the surface of the majority of soil types in the affected area, which will reduce wind erosion risk. Esperance staff will verify the formation of the surface seal when conditions allow. DAFWA will continue to work with industry partners to ensure that the wind erosion risk is minimised until ground cover can be established.
- (6) Funding requirements will be dependent upon the outcome of the wind erosion investigations referred to in (4) and (5).