

PRESCRIBED BURNING — FUEL LOADS

1454. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt to the parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Environment:

The Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) website states that reducing fuel loads is an important objective of the DBCA's prescribed burning program. In relation to the measurement and monitoring of fuel loads, I ask:

- (a) what programs, policies or planning tools are used to guide DBCA fuel load measurements, including when, where, and for what purpose fuel load measurements are undertaken:
  - (i) will the Minister table any relevant documents or otherwise provide an explanation of the program;
- (b) what is measured fuel load data used for, and is this data used by DBCA to assist in determining which areas will be prioritised for Prescribed burning:
  - (i) if so, how is this data used;
- (c) does the DBCA maintain reference sites where fuel load measurements are undertaken at regular intervals to record changes in fuel load over time:
  - (i) if so, how many such sites are maintained and where are they located;
- (d) does the Department maintain a database of measured fuel loads in DBCA-managed lands:
  - (i) if not, why not; and
  - (ii) if so, why is this information not available to members of the public or neighbouring landholders;
- (e) in the past 5 years, how many fuel load measurements have been undertaken in each of the following systems:
  - (i) Kwongan Heath or coastal heath;
  - (ii) Tingle forest;
  - (iii) Karri Forest;
  - (iv) Jarrah Forest;
  - (v) Wandoo Forest;
  - (vi) Peat systems;
  - (vii) The Walpole Wilderness Area;
  - (viii) The Fitzgerald Biosphere;
  - (ix) The Stirling Ranges; and
  - (x) Any other areas;
- (f) over the last five years, how many fuel load assessments have been undertaken by DBCA in areas that were not planned for prescribed burning at the time the assessment was undertaken;
- (g) where were the measurements in (f), taken;
- (h) will the Minister table the results of fuel load assessments undertaken over the last 3 years; and
- (i) will the Minister table the results, including fuel assessment sheets and fuel assessment summary Sheets of any fuel load assessments undertaken in the Walpole Wilderness Area over the last 5 years?

**Hon Darren West replied:**

- (a) The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions' (DBCA) fuel load measurements are generally undertaken as part of research projects and are completed as part of the prescribed burn planning process to validate fuel age assumptions within the planning area. There is no specific fuel load measurement program.
  - (i) Not applicable.
- (b) Fuel load data can be used to determine the percentage of total fuel available for consumption by fire under differing climatic and surface moisture conditions. The time since last fire is used to estimate the total of accumulated fuel. Time since last fire is used in the department's Bushfire Risk Management Framework to assist in determining priority areas for prescribed burning based on risk of bushfire to communities and assets.
  - (i) Not applicable.
- (c) No.

- (i) Not applicable.
- (d) No.
  - (i) Fuel load measurements are taken during the planning phase for prescribed burning and information retained as part of individual burn prescriptions. There is not a central database for fuel load records.
  - (ii) Not applicable.
- (e) The number of fuel load assessments undertaken across the systems listed in the past five years are likely to be greater than 5000. As the information is not retained in a central database, it is not possible to provide the information requested for the listed systems. I am happy to arrange a briefing by DBCA for the honourable Member.
- (f) DBCA fuel load measurements undertaken in areas not planned for prescribed burning over the past five years are generally related to research projects with most still subject to ongoing research. This data will be available when fully curated and appropriate for release or published.
- (g) Not applicable.
- (h) Not applicable.
- (i) Given the level of agency resourcing required to source and provide potentially relevant information, it is not considered to be a reasonable use of government resources. I am happy to arrange a briefing by DBCA for the Honourable Member.