

PRESCRIBED BURNING — ANIMAL WELFARE

1464. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt to the parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Environment:

- (1) For how many burns conducted over the last three years were fauna surveys undertaken prior to the burn?
- (2) For how many burns conducted over the last three years were fauna surveys undertaken after the burn operations?
- (3) Will the Minister table the results of the surveys in (1) and (2):
 - (a) if no to (3), why not?
- (4) What does the Department estimate is the annual mortality for mammals, reptiles, and birds respectively:
 - (a) during prescribed burning operations; and
 - (b) in the six month period following prescribed burns?
- (5) Are prescribed burning operations subject to the *Animal Welfare Act*?
- (6) If yes to (5), does the DBCA hold permits or authorisations for prescribed burns under the *Animal Welfare Act*?
- (7) If yes to (6), will the Minister please table these instruments?
- (8) Are prescribed burning operations reviewed by an ethics committee?
- (9) If yes to (8), which committee undertakes these reviews and what documentation is provided to the committee?
- (10) Will the Minister table any documentation provided to, or advice provided by, any ethics committees in relation to prescribed burning operations undertaken by DBCA over the last three years:
 - (a) if no to (10), why not?

Hon Darren West replied:

- (1)–(3) 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.
- (4) (a)–(b) It is important to acknowledge that the majority of plant and animal species endemic to the south-west of Western Australia have evolved in a fire prone environment and either have the ability to regenerate or take refuge. DBCA does not measure annual mortality of mammals, reptiles, and birds in areas where prescribed burning has been undertaken or in areas impacted by bushfire.

From a biodiversity perspective, prescribed burning is undertaken to maintain a range of wildlife habitat types through the creation of low fuel areas in a mosaic of burnt and unburnt patches across the landscape. Prescribed burns occur in more favourable conditions than intense summer bushfires, enabling animals more opportunities to safely move into areas of unburnt vegetation and various plant species opportunities to regenerate.
- (5) No.
- (6) Not applicable.
- (7) Not applicable.
- (8) No. DBCA appoints and supports an Animal Ethics Committee to ensure that animals used for scientific purposes are cared for and used in an ethical and humane manner and that DBCA meets its commitments under the *Animal Welfare Act 2002*, its licence to use animals for scientific purposes and the Code of Practice.
- (9) Not applicable.
- (10) Not applicable.