

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 223

asked on Thursday, 22 February 2007

MS NOLAN ASKED THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER AND MINISTER ASSISTING THE PREMIER IN NORTH QUEENSLAND (MR WALLACE)—

QUESTION:

Will he update the House on the progress of the Toadbuster Program?

ANSWER:

The Premier announced in early 2005, that Queensland would contribute \$1million over three years to the national research effort to develop alternative control strategies for cane toads. The Department of Natural Resources and Water has entered into a contract with the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre, who has sub-contracted the Institute of Molecular Biosciences at the University of Queensland, to do the research.

The research program aims to explore and better understand the chemical and microbial ecology of cane toads. Armed with this knowledge, it is hoped that synthetic chemicals specific to cane toads can be developed to improve baiting and trapping programs, disrupt breeding or render toads vulnerable to predators. The following progress can be reported.

Research units have been formed by the Institute of Molecular Biosciences to undertake the program. Studies to date have focused on small molecular components and pheromones from the skin secretions of toads.

Several peptides have been identified and one in particular is of interest. These are 'short' molecules that may be made synthetically. In addition, 50 proteins have been provisionally identified and are undergoing further analysis.

A further series of tests are being undertaken to assess how pheromones and chemicals excreted by cane toads affect their behaviour.

Finally, I will also point out that this matter now falls under Biosecurity Queensland, Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, and within the portfolio of my colleague, the Honourable Tim Mulherin MP, Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries.