

EGGS — ANIMAL WELFARE ACT REVIEW

896. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I refer to the state government's current review of the Animal Welfare Act.

- (1) Has the minister or the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development directed, instructed or otherwise promoted a view to ban the sale of caged eggs in WA as part of the review of the Animal Welfare Act?
- (2) Has any modelling been undertaken by the state government regarding the economic impacts, job losses, or financial costs associated with banning the sale of caged eggs in WA?
- (3) Can the minister confirm there are no plans by the state government to ban the sale of caged eggs in WA?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1) No. The purpose of the review is to ensure that our animal welfare legislation is modern, fit for purpose and meets community expectations.
- (2) At a federal level, the regulatory impact statement consultants on the proposed new Australian welfare standards and guidelines for the poultry industry are currently costing the proposed phase-out of conventional cages over 10 years.
- (3) In our submission to the draft standards, our government called for a 10-year phase-out of battery or conventional cages because they do not provide for all physiological and behavioural requirements or needs of egg-laying hens and, as such, are not in keeping with community expectation on the humane treatment of animals. We also called for new minimum standards to ensure any new cages are enriched or furnished, and recommended a reduction in stocking densities for broiler chickens, linking stocking density to performance on welfare. Those recommendations were based on a Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development review of scientific literature on the welfare of laying hens kept in cages and stocking densities for meat chickens.

Decisions by retailers as to what eggs they will sell, such as the recent decision by Coles to bring forward its phase-out of caged eggs from all stores in WA, presumably reflect their assessment of consumer sentiment. I will add that one thing that did concern me about the decision by Coles is the marketing of \$3 free-range eggs. It is difficult to see how it is possible for a producer to provide free-range eggs at that price. I note the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's current investigations, and I have also offered to the Commercial Egg Producers Association of Western Australia to do an independent assessment of the cost of producing free-range eggs to underpin any case it might make going forward.