

LIVE EXPORT — GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

539. Hon COLIN TINCKNELL to the Minister for Regional Development:

The suspension of Emanuel Exports' licence by the federal government and the temporary withdrawal of exports by Livestock Shipping Services will have a profound effect on Western Australian producers and farmers' livelihoods. Regardless of political agendas and fault apportioning, there is also a genuine crisis looming with many sheep stuck in limbo. With very few options presenting themselves for affected farmers who now need to provide for unplanned feeding in a period of increased prices and trading uncertainty, the reality is that a large number of WA producers will be suffering financially in the coming months of uncertainty. It is a well-known fact that financial stress and business uncertainty is a major cause of numerous issues ranging from bankruptcy, family breakdowns and mental health problems, to the ultimate threat to lives.

- (1) What is the state government doing in the immediate future to help WA farmers affected by this chain of events?
- (2) What plans are being developed to ensure that in the future similar situations cannot cause such chaos and can be mitigated immediately to ensure the welfare of not only the livestock, but also the farming communities who have in this instance had to pick up the pieces?

The PRESIDENT: Before that question is answered by the minister, that was a very long preamble. I understand it is an important issue to you, but I refer you to standing order 105 and the need for questions to be concise, just as answers should be concise.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(2) As I have said many times, we were seeking very much to avoid this sudden death to live export over the high summer months, but regardless of what we try to do, that is in fact what has happened. I am not seeking to underestimate that there will be some adjustment, but I honestly do not think the situation is as dire as the member is making out. We know there are somewhere around 60 000 sheep in a feedlot. At least two processors have come forward and said that they would be prepared to purchase those sheep should the owner, Emanuel Exports, be prepared to sell them. We understand that is not what Emanuel wants to do, but certainly that is a very real option. We understand that mutton and lamb prices in the markets have stayed at a reasonably high level at this stage. We are not suggesting that that might not change over the next couple of months, but there have been very good prices for sheepmeat and for wool. We are, as I said, working with the processors to make sure that there is an alternative. I will also be going to Qatar next week to talk to the importers of frozen and chilled meat to see how we can maximise those exports. We are meeting with farmers tomorrow to put in place a series of adjustments of ways in which we can help build some resilience in light of what has happened with live export.