

Hon Dr Steve Thomas; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Martin Aldridge; Hon Kate Doust;  
Hon Darren West; Hon Dr Brian Walker; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Hon Steve Martin

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**MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE AND FOOD — PERFORMANCE**

*Motion*

**HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition)** [10.11 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house —

- (a) notes that the Minister for Agriculture and Food has lost the confidence of the agricultural sector in Western Australia, including its representative bodies and farmers themselves;
- (b) notes that this loss of confidence is due to the minister's inability to adequately perform the role of Minister for Agriculture and Food and her inability to be across the issues impacting the industry; and
- (c) calls on the Minister for Agriculture and Food to resign that position, and if she refuses to do so, calls on the Premier to remove her.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I suspect it might be a fiery debate today, but I am quite looking forward to it. It was not that long ago that we had a debate in this house in which I asked members to consider the three worst-performing ministers in the McGowan government. At the time I had to raise the Minister for Agriculture and Food, who started at number three position—she was the third worst after number two—to jump above the now Minister for Forestry, who is out to destroy the timber industry. I would have thought that the minister —

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I would have thought that the minister might have taken a bit of notice of that. It is not actually a competition to the bottom. I do not think she has jumped over the Attorney General yet, but it is not a competition to get the gold medal position in this. It is not a competition.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** Members should take notice that the motion before the house today does not specifically refer to the Minister for Agriculture and Food's performance around foot-and-mouth disease; I noted the minister's comments earlier. This motion expresses a long-term discontent with the performance of the minister. Members might remember previous debates—there have been several previous debates —

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** There have been a number of debates about the performance of the Minister for Agriculture and Food, and we will get to some more detail, but I want to take this opportunity to address some of the issues around foot-and-mouth disease, just because it is topical. As we did yesterday, when we found something positive to say about the motion moved by the Labor Party on fisheries, we are going to find something positive to say about the minister before we get to some of the other issues in which significant performance would have to be demonstrated.

On the issue of foot-and-mouth disease, I agree with the Minister for Agriculture and Food that part of the role we need to play is to calm the debate and have a sensible, scientific debate around foot-and-mouth disease. I make this point because I have said that publicly and privately. I said so at the Liberal Party conference, if members want to read my comments. Obviously, one of the problems is that when one makes sensible comments on things like this, they do not necessarily run in the media, but I am sure that the ABC, which recorded those comments, would be happy to share them with any government members who want to ask for them.

It is the case that a little calm is required, and the minister initially went down the correct path in calling for calm, but then once again allowed the social engineering component of her portfolio to lose control of the debate. This is what comes out consistently with the Minister for Agriculture and Food. What do I say around foot-and-mouth disease? As the person probably most qualified to comment on this issue in the entire Parliament, I say this: we need a little calm around this issue. I have been in this industry for 30-something years and I have been preparing for foot-and-mouth disease for that entire time. I started my training in this disease in about 1985. We have been preparing for this for a very long time; it is not as though we have not been preparing. I remember Operation Apollo, which was based in Bunbury and was a foot-and-mouth disease preparedness operation that ran, from memory, in

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about 2016. It involved state and federal departmental officers, private vets and a whole range of other people. We have been preparing. An action plan for foot-and-mouth disease has been in place for a very long time. We have teams in place involving multiple departments that will step up when that plan is required.

The best thing we can do in relation to foot-and-mouth disease is to assist Indonesia to, firstly, reduce the spread; and secondly, ultimately eliminate the disease, if that is possible. Every dollar that we invest in supporting Indonesia will save \$1 000 in Western Australia, should that happen. I agree that it is the federal government's job to invest that money. It has invested some; I suspect it could invest more. During that time, we need to keep everyone a little calm. The minister, in the first part of this debate, was correct in trying to call for calm. The minister—who has developed a number of critics in the agricultural industry—and I both attended the Western Australian Farmers Federation's dairy conference a few weeks ago in Busselton, as did my good friend and colleague Hon Colin de Grussa. I had some interesting conversations with some of the minister's fiercest critics, including the president of the Western Australian Farmers Federation, John Hassell, who I used to know as "Alby". The CEO—who, like me, is a regular arguer with the minister—discussed the issue as well. We all agreed that calm was required; everyone agreed that we needed some calm in the process.

There is some support, as we go forward, with the minister's position on calm. I have said this publicly and privately, and other people have said the same thing. The minister said it also, for a while. That was great until she made some very inopportune comments in the media. These comments demonstrated not that the minister was wrong in calling for calm, but that her inability to connect with the agricultural industry was once again on display. That is why this motion is phrased as it is. It is not the minister's specific comments around foot-and-mouth disease that have led her astray; this is a minister with a history —

**Hon Martin Pritchard:** Will you take an interjection?

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** From you, Hon Martin Pritchard, I will.

**Hon Martin Pritchard:** Would this motion add to that calm?

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** It will, but it will also —

Several members interjected.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** No, stop and listen. Just before members shout out, stop and listen. It will, because the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council also called for calm. It will not make the media or the press, as it did not previously, but members of the Liberal Party who were at the conference can tell members that the comments I made at the conference are exactly the same comments that I made in the party room and in public. They might not run publicly, but the minister's words will help calm the farm, and we agree that calm is required. What we do not need is the minister once again alienating the agricultural sector by making the sorts of comments that she made. The minister will argue that she was quoted out of context and that she did not mean to make those comments and that a journalist used them. Perhaps they were even made off the record. What did the minister say? I suspect that the minister was briefed that there are a set of circumstances in which if foot-and-mouth disease did arrive in Western Australia, meat and milk might become cheaper. That briefing probably was correct, because there are a set of circumstances to which that would apply. We can discuss that in detail if members want. But that set of circumstances would also mean major devastation for farmers as part of the process. This is the issue that the opposition has with this Minister for Agriculture and Food: her focus, which was given away by her comments, is her social engineering agenda to purely look after consumers and not the agriculture industry. That has again come to the fore. It was the minister not looking after the agriculture industry that caused a huge backlash.

Several members interjected.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** They do not like it. They do not like the truth coming out.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I do not intend to provide guidance to the house this morning because I doubt that it will be listened to. I am simply going to call order.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** The screams are loudest when you kick a bruise, President. This is a minister who has history.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Similarly, I will not be providing guidance to you either, Leader of the Opposition, but I do invite you to stay on topic.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** Thank you, President. This is a minister who has history. We have had this debate before.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

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**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** They do not like it. When the minister says to the community that one of the bonuses of foot-and-mouth disease is that meat and milk might become cheaper, even though it is right, it shows a contempt for the agricultural industries.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** That contempt leaked out, despite the fact that some of the comments the minister made in the lead-up to that point were correct. Even the comment that she made that it might become cheaper in certain circumstances would be correct, but that does not help. Most importantly, that reflects the contempt for the producers and the industry for which the minister has now become famous, and what was the result of that? It was outrage across the board. Even the people who agreed with her position on foot-and-mouth disease were suddenly outraged that she would treat the agricultural sector with such contempt. This is a minister with form in this regard. This is a minister who is so focused on managing her agenda that she has forgotten to look after the agricultural sector in particular. We have debated this before and we debated it in the last Parliament. This minister is so focused on imposing her direction on agriculture that she has forgotten to look after the industry, particularly the traditional, more mainstream section of the industry. These are the sectors that the minister has shown contempt for, and meat and milk production is just the latest example of that. Foot-and-mouth disease was not suddenly a trigger that demonstrated that this minister has an issue. Foot-and-mouth disease is simply the last step and the latest example. The panic out there was not helped by having a minister who suddenly was seen to be derisive of the industry. Until that point, she had actually shown some intention to protect that industry. She had actually shown that she was trying to do the right thing until that point. But, once again, this agenda came out. Foot-and-mouth disease is a very frightening thing. I spent almost every day last week—a bit less—getting phone calls from farmers panicking about what is going on it. It takes half an hour to calm people down, and I spent a lot of time calming people down. That takes a long time.

**Hon Darren West:** Give us some names.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** Settle down. Oh my goodness! Does the member seriously want me to name the farmers who phoned me? The standard of debate has not improved from some government members.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I have said before that this minister is happy to be derisive towards mainstream agriculture. This is the minister for biodynamic quinoa, not the Minister for Agriculture and Food! The social engineering component just once again leaked out.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** We want a demonstration from this minister of support for agriculture across the board, but we have not seen that. We have given this minister years to do that. It is not as though this is the first debate on the issue of the performance of this minister in this area.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** We keep coming back to the same issue because the minister does not change her approach. It is not as though this is the first time we have debated the minister's performance and her commitment. Like I said, I had to bump her from third worst to the second worst minister during the last debate, based on the fact that the Leader of the House had to jump up and defend her at one point. It is not as though this is a new debate. This is a minister who has history in this area but who does not want to change. The astounding thing, of course, is that the minister's first offence when people started calling for either her resignation or to be sacked was to say that she was going in a couple of years' time so it does not matter. That was the defence: I am going anyway. It was not that she was going to change her approach.

I am pleased to see that the minister apologised for her comments because that was recognition that her comments were unwise. I think that if the minister had her time again, she would not say those comments a second time. I am sure that is the case. But we have to remember that the minister's comments in this area reflect a far bigger issue than simply the debate about foot-and-mouth disease and the panic involved with it. It is nice to see a response; the federal government has responded. I have outlined a position on foot-and-mouth disease that I think is accurate and legitimate, and I do not think anyone in the Parliament has more knowledge of the issue than me. This is a long-term trend with this minister. We would like to see a change, but we have no confidence that the minister will change.

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We would like to see this minister dedicated to agriculture rather than to the social engineering for which she has become renowned.

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** Horse ship.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I am not sure whether some of these words are parliamentary, minister, but anyway. Several members interjected.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I think some of the words might be testing the limits of parliamentary protocols.

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** I said “horse ship”. You cannot use the word with a “t” in our house with a seven-year-old, and so you say horse ship—with a “p”.

**The PRESIDENT:** Thank you, members. I will probably do my best to give some indication if I hear any offensive language.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** They like to torment me, President. We will see how they go in the debate. We are going to run out of time very quickly.

**Hon Kyle McGinn:** What a shame!

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** The opposition —

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** You can’t talk quickly enough!

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I am sure government members do not like the debate and would like it to end; I am sure that is the case. What is the opposition asking for? The opposition is asking for the minister to do her job—to look after the interests of agriculture. What would that look like? Here is a positive suggestion—I like to start and finish on a positive note. Obviously, the initial response to foot-and-mouth disease, lumpy skin disease and ultimately rinderpest and a whole pile of other exotic diseases are based on the response by the federal government. The government is doing some things. Let us not get too excited about things like footbaths in airports, because that will have a limited impact. If foot-and-mouth disease comes in, it is 90-something per cent likely to come in through uncooked or undercooked meat products, for which there are rules and laws in place. A bit of an education campaign would not hurt. The federal government is going down that path and it is its job to do that. All those things are important. But what could this minister do? I have banged on in this house for years about biosecurity and the control of feral animals in particular. I know that the minister and I agree on things like arum lilies and bits and pieces, but having a genuine attack on feral animals, particularly feral ungulates that would spread not just foot-and-mouth—we should not get overly excited about that—but other diseases as well is where this minister could dedicate her time.

We took a policy to the last election to beef up biosecurity, which the government has abandoned ship on. It has taken the work of biosecurity from government and outsourced it to very well-meaning but highly under-resourced recognised biosecurity groups. Before we go back in history and decide who determined that, it actually came in through a piece of legislation under Hon Kim Chance, who was a good fellow and agriculture minister but a member of the Labor Party. The Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act introduced the abandoning of biosecurity by government. But the attacks on the Agriculture Protection Board go back further than that. If this minister wanted to demonstrate a genuine commitment to agriculture in this state, she would be throwing resources at the removal and control of feral animals, pests and diseases and weed plants. That would be a positive contribution. I like to start positive and finish positive, President. That is something this minister should be taking up. Instead of continually demonstrating a level of contempt for agricultural industries, be it live shipping, transport —

Several members interjected.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** Listen to this: I understand that the government will reintroduce the combined animal welfare farm trespass laws—the ones it tried to introduce and had thrown out last time. Now that Labor has control, it will once again demonstrate its contempt for farmers, landholders and agricultural industries, and that will be driven in part by this minister. Let us have this minister protect and support agriculture and look after farmers. She should be seen to do so or she should go.

Government members: President!

**Hon Tjorn Sibma:** Look at all these loyal foot soldiers!

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Thank you, members.

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**HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Emergency Services)** [10.33 am]: President, it will be no surprise to you or any member of this house that I will not support this scandalous and outrageous motion this morning. What a farce!

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** Are you the lead speaker?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** No, I am not the lead speaker, but I am standing up to point out the fallacies and inaccuracies in the contribution made by Hon Dr Steve Thomas this morning. I am reminded of some of the events that I have been to over the last few days, whether with the Minister for Agriculture and Food or without. I refer to people like Carnarvon's Danny Kuzmicich from Vegetables WA, who stood up at the Gascoyne food event last Friday night in front of a crowd of hundreds of people and said thank you to this minister for the great work she has done with Vegetables WA and in Carnarvon. That is one part of the sector. I was reminded of an event earlier this week when Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd, the grain mob, was upstairs in this place. Again, a representative of CBH stood up in front of a collected gathering—some of the members of this place were there—and thanked this minister for the work she has done with that sector over the past few years. She is a great minister. If ever someone wants a minister in their corner fighting for them, she is the minister to have, because she rolls up her sleeves and gets things done. She is incredible. Hon Dr Steve Thomas should be ashamed of his motion this morning. It is my understanding that Ian Noakes, whom the member spoke about in his contribution a few minutes ago, thanked the minister at the dairy conference. That industry had tried to work with the previous Liberal–National government. Guess what? They got nowhere! But with this minister, they have a good relationship with government and they are getting things done.

Let me remind members of what she took over from: she took over from a government that had absolutely failed the farming sector in Western Australia. I will quote from an article that appeared in *The Weekend West*. Let me read this out, because this is really important stuff. It states —

The Pastoralists and Graziers Association and WAFarmers said that, well into its second term, the Government —

The Barnett government —

had increased the costs of production and delivered virtually nothing in return.

The PGA, a breeding ground for Liberal Party MPs, rated the Government's performance in agriculture a four out of 10. WAFarmers, which is more closely aligned with the Nationals, rated it two out of 10.

The article goes on —

Their long-list of Government failures included:

- The debacle over management of grain freight rail lines in the Wheatbelt.
- Big cuts at the Department of Agriculture and Food WA.

I will come back to that —

- The refusal to reactivate the Police Department's stock squad to crack down on livestock theft.

The list goes on! The article also states —

PGA president Tony Seabrook said the Government was hiding on the rail issue, was guilty of an “absolute belly flop” on James Point and was trying to fob off tenure reform for pastoralists.

That was your government! You should be ashamed of it!

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Two calls to order is enough; on the third order, you are out of bounds.

**Hon Kyle McGinn** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! When I call order, the house should calm down. Before the member speaks, it is not a good idea to interject.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** This side of the house respects the agriculture portfolio. We gave the agricultural sector a wonderful minister in Kim Chance and we have given it an exceptional minister in Hon Alannah MacTiernan. The honourable Leader of the Opposition said that the minister does not change her approach. She does not change her approach because she remains committed to delivering for this sector! Every hour of the day, she remains focused on delivering. Let me talk about some of the things she has done in her time as Minister for Agriculture and Food; these are things we should be proud about. She fought for and delivered \$131 million extra in the 2019–20 budget for the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. That was to deal with the fiscal cliff the department was about to fall off thanks to the mismanagement and massive cuts of the last Liberal–National

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government. Hundreds of workers from that department lost their jobs or were due to lose their jobs as a result of the previous government's leadership, mismanagement and lack of care for this sector. You gutted the department! I remember talking to an agricultural scientist when I was in opposition who was devastated at the fact that your government was gutting the department. You did not care about the sector. You certainly did not care about supporting the sector. You were gutting the department. This minister delivered a record investment. Since that time, the department has continued to grow. The latest figures I have are that it has gone from a staff of 1 664 in 2018 up to 1 737 in 2023, whereas it would have gone down to about 750 or 800 staff if the previous Liberal–National government had remained in office. That is what you should be ashamed about. You say that you represent the agricultural sector. Horse ship is what I say to that.

What else has the minister done? She has delivered for the grains sector in Western Australia. We have had a \$48 million grain research partnership with the Grains Research and Development Corporation. The minister has put money in to kickstart Western Australia's agricultural research collaboration to futureproof the state's primary industries. She has reinvigorated our research stations, whether that is the Carnarvon research station that got a boost or the world-class sheep research facility in Katanning, with an \$8 million investment. That is world-leading stuff. The Merredin Dryland Research Institute also received funding. The Frank Wise Institute of Tropical Agriculture in Kununurra has been revitalised; we have recruited new scientists and innovation is occurring there. Quinoa grows in Kununurra, Western Australia, in my electorate. Farmers grow quinoa and I eat it.

Members opposite should be ashamed of themselves. This minister delivers for the whole agricultural sector, not just a few. She restored and re-established the Soil and Land Conservation Council after a 16-year hiatus. She has modernised it and modernised the legislation. She has put money into agricultural climate resilience to support farmers to respond to climate change because, like ministers on this side, she believes that climate change is real and it is happening. We are going to work to try to fix it. It is great that a federal Labor government is in now because when the mob opposite was in government, they did not care about it and we went backwards.

The minister has boosted natural resource management funding. It was my pleasure as the Minister for Environment to work with this minister collaboratively over the last few years. She is an exceptional minister. She keeps delivering. She supports growth in the industry. She has provided funding towards a processed oats industry growth partnership that aims to double the value of the oat grain industry in Western Australia over the next 20 years. The wine industry, too, has had an investment, building international demand for our high-quality wines.

To manage the impact of wild dogs, \$30 million has been put forward, which includes funds for the repair and maintenance of the state barrier fence, the Esperance extension and cell fences in Kalgoorlie, Carnarvon and the Murchison.

The minister is driving new industries. We have the Peel food technology centre in the Peel region. Again, right across the agricultural sector, this minister keeps delivering. She has passion and enthusiasm and she does not shy away from hard work. Day in, day out, this minister delivers.

I could speak for hours this morning, but noting that everyone on this side wants to speak and they have good things to say, I will leave my comments there. I remind you, President, that I will not be supporting this motion this morning and I dare say my colleagues will not either because this minister is sensational. She continues to achieve for the agricultural region in Western Australia. She will not be resigning. She will not be sacked. What is more, she will continue to do the great job that she has been doing for the last five years.

**HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [10.42 am]: The debate has been fantastic so far this morning. The red wave on the other side continues to crash, of course. But we need to acknowledge that this motion has not come out of anything recent; it has come out of the five years and five months during which the Minister for Agriculture and Food has mismanaged that portfolio. It is a consequence of not just those most recent gaffes on foot-and-mouth disease but also a failure that is manifest in the dysfunction of her own department—a department that has been beset by poor morale, high staffing attrition rates and questionable administrative and financial management practices.

Several members interjected.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** Hang on a sec! We want to go and look in the rear-view mirror. These events that occurred in 2020–21 were identified in the Auditor General's qualified audit opinions. They are significant because they point to the agency's inability to effectively manage its administrative processes. I will quote from that audit opinion. It states —

The audit identified there were deficiencies in the Department's controls over restricted cash. This resulted in restricted cash being used inappropriately throughout the year to fund shortfalls in operational cash.

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The audit identified significant weaknesses in the payroll controls implemented by the Department. These weaknesses could result in salary errors such as overpayments and payments to individuals who are not entitled to receive payment. Consequently, controls to prevent invalid and inaccurate payroll payments were inadequate.

...

In 2019–20, the audit opinion on controls was qualified because there were significant weaknesses in general computer controls implemented by the Department.

That is the department of which this minister has oversight. It continues —

These weaknesses could result in unauthorised access to sensitive information and increased risk of information loss.

Five years in, this government has no control over its department. The minister's authority and oversight of that department is failing.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** Thank you, President. I repeat —

These weaknesses could result in unauthorised access to sensitive information and increased risk of information loss.

The combined weaknesses expose the Department to vulnerabilities which can undermine the integrity of information in the Department's finance, human resources and other business systems. The Department has made insufficient progress to address these weaknesses in 2020–21. Therefore, general computer controls were not adequate throughout 2020–21.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** Thank you, President. It is equally significant that the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development failed to remedy the issues raised by the Auditor General in 2019 and 2020 and was subject to further qualifications in 2021.

Ordinarily, agencies have to act on those qualified audits as a matter of urgency but the department's failure, under the watch of this minister, is a clear indication of the dysfunction and chaos that exists in that agency. It also points to a lack of oversight by the minister of how her agency is being run, and that is the key here because that is her job as minister—not just to stand up and release media statements and look good in front of the camera; it is to be in complete control of the department over which she has oversight.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** To take responsibility.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** Yes, to take responsibility. That is something that those on the other side seem to fail to understand. As my colleague Hon Tjorn Sibma said, they look in the rear-view mirror and look back in time all the time because they cannot look forward. They want to look back in history all the time. They never want to accept responsibility.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** Thank you, President. It is clear to me that government members keep wanting to look in the rear-view mirror and blame their mistakes on someone else but they never accept responsibility for what is happening today. In fact, the minister actually fessed up to the issues and the lack of oversight in Parliament, in this very place, on 18 November 2021, when she stated —

... it is one that has certainly concerned me and that is the qualified audit in the annual report of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. It is a concern I share. I just want to make it very clear to the member that there seems to have been some inference that some funds may have been misspent. I do not believe that that is what the audit is saying. It is certainly referring to some less than satisfactory processes that are at play in the department and the financial management within the department ...

Members may laugh at that but if that is how the Labor Party wants to manage its departments, it is a long way down there. I repeat —

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It is certainly referring to some less than satisfactory processes that are at play ...

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** I repeat again —

It is certainly referring to some less than satisfactory processes that are at play in the department and the financial management within the department, and I do not think we can gloss over it. These matters have been the subject of a number of reports. I am reasonably confident, with the team currently looking at this now, that we will get on top of it. There are a number of problems.

The minister admitted that there are problems. Basically, the minister's statements were made after numerous adverse audit findings on an agency for which she had responsibility for over four and a half years by that time. Four and a half years into the job, she only just discovered these problems; she had not twigged to them until an issue was raised by the opposition in Parliament. Over five years after being created, DPIRD is finally now investing in the skills and systems needed to run the agency in compliance with its financial and administrative obligations. What does that say about oversight by this minister and the people appointed to manage that department? The same might also be said about the \$15 million investment in biodiversity used to fund 22 new FTEs, 17 of whom are based in Perth. The opposition, agriculture industry groups and primary producers have all signalled very significant issues with DPIRD's inability to proactively manage the threat of pest and disease incursions into Western Australia. For five years we have been telling the minister that there are issues in the department, with skilled and experienced officers leaving in droves—the red wave.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** Thank you, President. I do like a good interjection from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Fisheries. They are quite amusing. He should find another career, one in comedy, unlike myself. For five years now we have been telling this minister that there are issues in the department, with skilled and experienced officers leaving in droves, dysfunctional management, and a lack of regional on-the-ground resources. Nothing has changed. This government has not been listening for five and a half years. The agriculture industry and the opposition raised very specific issues surrounding DPIRD's ability to respond to an outbreak such as FMD way before it happened. I am not going to go on in detail about FMD. My colleague Hon Dr Steve Thomas —

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** You've had an expert. You should listen.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** They have had an expert. Enough has been said about that unfortunate gaffe, but it unfortunately says more than anything. Those comments crystallise, in the most brutal way possible, this minister's disdain of, disrespect for and absence of understanding about the industry over which she presides. This is an agriculture minister who stood in support with protesters against live export, stacked the animal welfare review panel, failed to deliver upgrades to our biosecurity laws and never came to grips with the fundamental requirements of one of the most critical portfolios in government. She has chosen to lecture an industry that has been at the forefront of cutting-edge technology, land management practices, advances in animal welfare and husbandry and the development of drought and disease-resistant crops. All of these things have been happening, and this minister wants to lecture farmers on how they go about their business. Clearly, this minister has failed to understand the extreme difficulties in managing sophisticated farming enterprises with the uncertainty of climate, the volatility of global commodity prices and an ever-increasing rise in input costs.

There has been a failure to do anything constructive about addressing the workforce shortages that occurred during COVID-19, aside from the infamous “linen and boat shoes skipping through the vineyard” advertisements that were meant to attract people to agriculture—not a great, raging success, and the members will support that.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** The fact that this minister can sit here now and tout that same initiative, which reappears in the current budget, is a reflection of where this party is at and where this minister is at. It is clear that this minister had preconceived ideas about agriculture when she came into office.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I advise members not to call on other members to sit down. Hon Martin Aldridge.

**HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural)** [10.53 am]: I thank the honourable members opposite for their encouragement and their confidence in me, even if they do not have confidence in their own minister.



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Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** You're protesting too much. It gives the game away.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! It is probably not a good idea to interject on your own side.

**Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE:** What do you have to do to be sacked from Mark McGowan's cabinet? That is the question that opened the opinion piece by state political reporter Peter Law on 5 August 2022: "What do you have to do to be sacked from Mark McGowan's cabinet?" It has been a very interesting debate today. It is interesting to see how excited members opposite have become on this topic. I think they actually have some defending to do, and that is made quite obvious by the performances this morning. We received a very passionate response from the Deputy Leader of the House—surprisingly, not the government response. It is a little unusual for another minister to respond before the minister does. Nevertheless, I took it as a job application to become the Minister for Agriculture and Food. He gave such a strong and passionate performance that I think there could be change on the way.

It is interesting that a lot of the submissions that have been made this morning, mostly by interjections, have been about how capable the Minister for Agriculture and Food is. Amongst others, I think she has proven herself over many years in terms of her capability. Leadership is much more than being capable, though, and this is where I think a distinction ought to be made. In this portfolio, there is overwhelmingly a lack of confidence in this minister to continue as the leader of and advocate for agriculture in the government of Western Australia.

This minister has a record of being provocative, and I think there have been a number of instances, not least the most recent one, which the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition have highlighted, in which being provocative has gone too far. That is why we find ourselves in a position today where we have people standing up and saying, "Did anyone go to the CBH cocktail party on Tuesday night? They love this minister." I say to government members: do not mistake politeness for support or for confidence. I think you need to get out more, out into our regions, and speak to industry if you believe that this government has the support and confidence of industry. It does not—far from it.

In the course of this debate, particularly over the last few weeks, there has been a moment that I like to refer to as the relief-valve moment, when the minister said, "The pressure is building. I am going to leave in a couple of years, so just let me see out my term. Let's open the relief valve and let a bit of pressure out, and then maybe I'll survive another little bump in the road." If I were my good friend Hon Matthew Swinbourn, I would be asking to swap with Hon Darren West on the front bench. We are starting to get a bit of a line-up of a retirement bench over there. I think Hon Matthew Swinbourn has a long career in this place, in stations much higher than he is permitted at the moment. If I were Hon Matthew Swinbourn, I would be starting to distance myself from the retirement bench opposite.

The interjections this morning have often reflected, as I think Hon Colin de Grussa has said, in the rear-view mirror. Back in 2014 there was article titled, "Kim Hames 'not fussed' about move to backbench ahead of retirement at next WA election". This was in November, shortly after Dr Hames, who was then the Deputy Premier, had had heart surgery. He was reflecting on his approaching 60<sup>th</sup> birthday and his intention to retire at the next election. The article reports what the then opposition leader said —

Opposition Leader Mark McGowan said all the talk of leadership and Cabinet posts was evidence of the disarray within Government ranks.

"Kim Hames is clearly cruising to retirement," he said.

"I think it would be best if he moved to the backbench now and gave someone else a go.

That was the now Premier on the ABC news back in November 2014. We know this is not the only minister who has announced their impending retirement, and it will be interesting to see whether Hon Mark McGowan will put pressure on those members to step aside and "give someone else to go". There is no shortage of mouths to feed in the Labor Party. In fact, I think it has more mouths than any other government in history.

**Hon Darren West:** Which means you have fewer.

**Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE:** It has lots of mouths to feed.

Several members interjected.

**Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE:** There is certainly support on this side for someone else to have a go, as the Premier insisted when he was opposition leader, not just with Dr Hames, but with a number of cabinet ministers who were retiring, particularly ahead of the 2017 election. That was the precedent that was established by Hon Mark McGowan when he was opposition leader. He now appears to be applying a very different standard to his own government.

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I have great faith in the long-serving Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture and Food. He has served the longest traineeship in parliamentary history to become the minister. He may well have lost his Twitter licence from the Premier, but he still has his Facebook licence. After serving a very long traineeship in the role, and as the self-professed only farmer in the WA Parliament, I think he will be well equipped and more than capable of stepping in and taking on —

*Point of Order*

**Hon KATE DOUST:** I do not understand the relevance of the comments that the member is making about Hon Darren West. I do not see the connection to this motion and I think it is inappropriate. He should refer his comments to whatever he is trying to say on this motion.

**The PRESIDENT:** Thank you, honourable member. This motion has three parts. It is therefore wide ranging. The last part is particularly wide ranging, but I understand that the honourable member was coming back to make his point about that. There is no point of order.

*Debate Resumed*

**Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE:** I thank the member opposite for the opportunity to catch my breath.

Obviously, this motion calls for the replacement of the Minister for Agriculture and Food, so of course it is relevant that we canvass who ought to replace her. If this motion could be improved, it probably could have also reflected on her performance as the Minister for Regional Development. On many occasions, I have talked about the money laundering—like exercise that is occurring with royalties for regions, and there is no better example than this state budget, through which the government is reducing its money laundering because it has to fit more slush into the slush bucket!

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE:** Unfortunately, this is a very time-limited debate and the opposition leader was right; we have to focus on the portfolio of agriculture and food. We could not, surely, include regional development as well; otherwise, this minister would have well and truly been gone long before now.

There has been a lot of support from members opposite for their minister. It would be very interesting if members would support a suspension of standing orders today to allow this motion to be put to a vote. Then they could put on the record their support for their minister and they could go out to their electorates.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE:** If members think that their minister maintains confidence in this portfolio, they can keep thinking that because that will only be to our benefit at the next election. Good luck!

**HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary)** [11.03 am]: I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this motion today. I totally and unreservedly reject this motion.

*Point of Order*

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** President, can I just check: if the minister is intending to give a reply, tradition has obviously been that private members' business is the government's time and non-government members' business is the opposition's time. I note that almost every member in the chamber has stood to seek the call. The Minister for Emergency Services got the call first. There is potentially the chance that more government speakers might get time to speak in this debate than opposition members in the opposition's time.

**The PRESIDENT:** I take your point, honourable member. That is not the potential. I have a very thorough list that notes every single member who has stood and sought the call. Currently, non-government members certainly have the numbers in terms of how many have spoken. There are definitely a lot more on the government side who are seeking to speak. As usual, I am trying to seek the views of the government in the non-government business debate, as is the practice. I assumed, perhaps incorrectly, that the deputy leader was going to provide the government response. The honourable member has the call and I will continue to try to provide balance, as I always do during non-government business.

*Debate Resumed*

**Hon DARREN WEST:** Thank you, President, for your fairness. I take the Leader of the Opposition's point, and I will be as brief as possible. If there are no interjections, it will speed things up a little.

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I totally and unreservedly reject the motion. I think it needs to be called out for what it is: it is a cheap political, personal attack and it is disgusting. It has not even come from the opposition. As usual, what happens is that opposition members read the paper and come in here and attack a minister over something they have read in the paper. They do not even do their own research and work.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** Are you saying that other people have attacked the minister in the paper?

**Hon DARREN WEST:** There has been an ongoing attack, which the member knows full well about, by Trevor Whittington and John Hassell from the Western Australian Farmers Federation. It is a disgraceful personal slur against our minister, and I am going to call that out today. I note that Hon Colin de Grussa regularly referred to notes, and I have a bit of an idea who might have written those notes. This is a cheap and nasty political attack that demeans non-government business and the business of the house. Debates should not degenerate to a point at which members go after one person, and the person, not their performance. They at least deserve some respect for being a minister, a member of this house, a human being and a woman. I think members should show a little bit more respect and decorum when they bring in motions.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon Donna Faragher** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon Tjorn Sibma** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! That was five “orders”! I do not expect that to happen again, particularly when I call it the first time.

**Hon DARREN WEST:** I just make that point early in the piece. We all know where this is coming from. We all know why it is happening. The public hates this. The public hates that members opposite go after the person. That is what we are seeing here. I think they might have just put their woman problem on display for everyone to see.

I go back to the motion brought on by the opposition, which is so bad that it cannot even run a decent fear campaign about foot-and-mouth disease, and fuelled by the media. As we have pointed out, the Barnett government was the worst in Western Australian history. Its carcass is the worst opposition. It is absolutely hopeless.

I would like to give a shout-out to Ashley Wiese from Wagin and Three Farmers quinoa. It is a wonderful business that we have supported. It is a great supporter of this minister. We have provided a regional economic development grant to assist this new industry in Western Australia. Hon Alannah MacTiernan is a very dear and close friend of mine. She is a wonderful minister. She has made a great contribution to Western Australia. There are some amazing infrastructure projects, some amazing new agricultural initiatives and some amazing regional development-funded opportunities around this state that we can attribute to this minister. Nobody on the other side can make such claims. In fact, we have a bunch of people over there no-one has ever heard of criticising a legend of Western Australia and a legend of Western Australian politics, and I think it is pretty ordinary.

I am going to stand by the minister. This minister is the best Minister for Agriculture and Food we have had. I always said that about Hon Kim Chance but I think Hon Alannah MacTiernan might have just eclipsed my great friend and mentor Kim. Alannah challenges the status quo. She challenges and thinks about what is not. Nobody on the other side is capable of doing that so it is really important that somebody does. I wish this little campaign would end. The minister is staying in the job. She is the best person for the job. She has clout in cabinet. She is incredibly hardworking. She is incredibly smart. She is one of the best people I know. She is a genuine person who cares about her industry and the people in it. A cheap political pointscoring exercise on the floor of the Parliament is really not the way members opposite are going to undo the minister. They have not landed a glove on the government in five years and they have still not landed a glove this morning. I am going to heap praise on the minister because she deserves it. I am quite flattered by the comments made by Hon Martin Aldridge, but Alannah MacTiernan can do a much better job of this portfolio than anybody else. She is a great minister and she is going to stay a great minister.

**HON DR BRIAN WALKER (East Metropolitan)** [11.10 am]: I have to say that I am unable to agree with the motion. I think Hon Dr Steve Thomas has genuine feelings about this—I will ascribe that to him. He notes that the Minister for Agriculture and Food has lost the confidence of the agricultural sector; I would reword that to include

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“a portion”. The question is how big a portion? For that reason alone, I cannot support the motion. However, there are other points to bring out. We absolutely know, and Hon Darren West pointed out, that there is a split. I personally have information from people in the agricultural sector who give their full support to the minister. Steve Birkbeck is well known here. He was a guest here last year, talking to members of this house about incremental change, especially in the hemp industry. This gentleman has 450 head of cattle. I must give a bit of a preamble to this. My family has been personally affected by foot-and-mouth disease. My sister and her husband were sheep farmers in the borders of Scotland when foot-and-mouth disease rampaged through. The amount of distress and number of animals lost and livelihoods lost were major issues. It is not expected to be any different here. The fact that the minister’s words were perhaps taken out of context is entirely attributable to the media’s desire to sell copy. We have all been affected by that. Mr Birkbeck has 450 head of cattle and would absolutely be affected by foot-and-mouth disease. This gentleman has spent time and energy, and a lot of money, to develop his business over 35 years. He is a man with impeccable credentials who has given praise to the minister. I will quote from the *Albany Advertiser* —

“I think there has got to be perspective on this, I think there has got to be calm,” he said.

He said the minister had —

... been a “great ambassador” for the region and he felt her comments had been “distorted”.

I fully agree with that. The article continues to quote him directly —

“Yes she put her foot in her mouth on this touchy subject, and should not have offered an honest opinion—a rare quality in a politician these days ...

“I believe the point she was trying to make that has been selectively quoted and distorted was to put a reality check on the fear and anxiety running through our community.

“Due to our ... biosecurity systems climate and scale we will be able to contain the disease, that was the point, we are not the UK and will not be burning millions of cattle.

“She has been put through the wringer and I say enough is enough.”

He went on to say —

“As a large cattle farmer I call for a short pause in our visitation to the Bali hotspot while we support the Balinese to stamp this out.”

That puts the onus on ourselves to look after our own state by not travelling to a place where it is rampant and then bring it back through our airport. We would take responsibility for looking after our state as individuals rather than blaming another individual. He said —

“If we want to express our stress in a productive way, then let’s aim our frustration at those who ... have control of our State’s borders, the Federal Parliament, an area Minister MacTiernan has no control over ...

I thought those were very clear and fair comments. Steve Birkbeck is a major hemp producer. He is known as a serious farmer in the south west. He has spoken to me many times about the qualities of our minister—a serious minister doing a serious job—saying that she has done her utmost to serve the state for a maximum potential. I think we all know Steve; if members do not, they should because he has a wonderful place in Denmark. He has just made a dam and I highly recommend we all take a trip down there, if nothing else but to relieve our own stress. This is a man who does not pull his punches. This is a man who knows what to do. He has made a lot of money by doing the hard thing, flying against the usual paths, swimming upstream and achieving that which other people would find impossible. Members may disagree with him and he would disagree with the minister from time to time. This is a man who tells the government what he thinks and he says when he disagrees with the government. To give his support to our minister I think is a mark of respect. I have to say that with my limited experience in Parliament, I have a great deal of respect for all members in the chamber, but for Minister MacTiernan I have absolute respect as a person I would not want to cross in a fight. Is that not true, minister?

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan:** I wouldn’t fight you, member.

**Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER:** Steve would also never take a cheap shot. He has many things in his favour here including these three: he is truthful, constructive and thoughtful. He has urged for calm. He notes the media spin, which is always a danger for us in politics. The minister has not lost support. There are people who do not support her. I can think of farmers who think that deep ripping is a good way of treating our land and other farmers who think permaculture is a far better way of looking after it. I personally think that having hemp as an agricultural product is a great way of transforming the topsoil. I was speaking to a soil scientist just this morning who pointed out that every kilogram of wheat costs eight kilograms of topsoil. Losing our topsoil to produce our wheat is a great way of making our state unproductive in the future. We must focus on fixing this problem. That is something I hope that the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is dealing with. With a hardworking

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minister, who is very knowledgeable with genuine concern, I would stand behind her in a heartbeat. I would not perhaps stand behind the leadership. Hon Martin Aldridge mentioned the leadership. What we really need here is to have strong leadership. This is where I will criticise the government, but I will criticise every government. I fully remember my incandescent anger about the disrespect with which Hon Colin Barnett treated the people of Western Australia. I am sure that was not his intention. I will ascribe good intentions to every politician here, but this is what happens. Our current Premier ought to be more aware of the needs of people in the state and give clear leadership. I am not just talking about COVID, but also agriculture. For example, we ought to do something about the barriers to having hemp as a product on every farm in every part of our state. We need a Premier who will lead by example and encourage his hardworking minister to do the same. I could certainly criticise DPIRD. There is not a single government organisation that is not open to some form of criticism. We are all fallible. Every single one of us will make a misstep, will misspeak. None of us are perfect beings but the main thing is that we try our best. I would put my full support by the current minister, but maybe not behind the Premier. That is to be expected; I am not in power. Thank you for your service, minister.

**HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (South West — Minister for Agriculture and Food)** [11.17 am]: The other night in this Parliament, we had an event celebrating 24 million tonnes of agricultural grain crop for 2021. It really was an extraordinary record crop. Of course, that was an absolute testament to the energy, hard work, commitment and adoption of innovation by our farmers right across our grain belt. Standing behind that incredible achievement, members need to understand that it was during a period of constant growth in the size of the harvest that we have been able to get in this state but it is against a backdrop of climate change. In the south west land division, we have seen a steady decline in rainfall and a steady increase in temperatures. This great work that farmers have been able to achieve, this great prosperity that they have driven into the regions, has behind it a whole infrastructure of research and development and biosecurity that comes from investment by government. This is an absolutely integral part of the success of our farming sector; it is a precondition.

When I was given this job—somewhat to my surprise—in 2017, I was very, very conscious from my time in federal Parliament and from watching what was going on in this state that this was an area of government in crisis. I say this not to be backward-looking but so that members understand what we have been able to achieve in this portfolio. When we left government in 2008, the then Department of Agriculture had a staff of over 1 500. By the time we got back into government, that number had been cut to 997, with further cuts planned to take it down to 750. When someone asked Mr Barnett why he kept cutting agriculture, he replied, “Because no-one complained.” Well, there were some complaints, but they certainly were not coming from members opposite.

We were facing a department that had undergone this great contraction; person had been set upon person, and there had been a deliberate government policy to wind back research and development—that long-term, disinterested scientific study that has been at the heart of the success of our grain and livestock sectors. The previous government deliberately walked away from research and development. It was chaos; the leadership was in conflict, and we had to rebuild it. I am very proud that this government has absolutely been able and prepared to invest in research and development. We have done the hard yards in rebuilding this agency, and it has taken time. It has not been perfect, but that is understandable, given the magnitude of the task. There was no plan for grains; there had been talk of a grains institute, but it had not been put in. The Grains Research and Development Corporation, the major industry body that collects all the resources and industry contributions across the country, was giving Western Australia a negligible percentage because, it argued, we had lost capacity. We had to fight to rebuild that and to get GRDC to come back and invest in Western Australia.

I am very pleased with what we have been able to produce. The first deal we did was to get a \$48 million grains research partnership with GRDC. We wanted it to be more, but that was a real step forward. Since then, we have more successfully engaged with GRDC. Just the other day we signed another \$25 million project with it, the Western Australian agricultural research collaboration. That has been fought for; scientists in the department have wanted that for years, so we put \$25 million on the table for the first three years, and if it works, we will do more. That will mean we will be able to leverage up with all the industry bodies across the agricultural sector to get that investment.

We visited all the research stations around the state, and I was appalled, whether it was the Carnarvon Research Facility, the Frank Wise Institute in the Kimberley or the Merredin Research Station. They had not been able to call themselves research institutes anymore, and we saw a decline in all these facilities. There had been no investment in their infrastructure, but this government has turned that around. I am really proud that, when we visit those facilities now, we see vibrant research centres full of scientists and technical advisers.

We allocated \$15 million in the budget last year for biosecurity, and that has given us a high level of preparedness. When I first became Minister for Agriculture and Food, the very first phone call I had was from the South Australian agriculture minister who said, “Do you know how hopeless your department is on biosecurity?” I had not yet even been sworn in. He said, “Its biosecurity capability is very limited.” We have rebuilt that.

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It is true that I have ruffled some feathers through my support for farmers who want to build biological systems, particularly pastoralists who have been hankering for investment in carbon farming; we fought for that and delivered it for those pastoralists. That is making the southern rangelands far more economically viable. I understand that there are farmers who do not want us to go down that path. I say to them: we are doing two things. We are doing the traditional stuff, and we are doing it better, because we are putting money into research and development and biosecurity, but at the same time we are setting up new capabilities in the agency through our climate resilience fund and land restoration fund. We can see the challenges that are coming across the horizon, and that is my job. My job is not just going out there and wanting to be loved; my job is to try to identify what the future threats and challenges are in this industry, and to work to offer opportunities and ways to build that resilience. I am very proud of that work.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order, minister. I just want an indication of how much longer you will take. We have five minutes left, and a non-government member wishes to speak.

**Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN:** Okay. I just want to say that I have worked incredibly hard in this area, I am proud of what we have achieved, and I want to take this work forward and make sure that we finish the job.

**HON STEVE MARTIN (Agricultural)** [11.27 am]: I rise to support the intent of the motion moved by my colleague. I go back to the gestation of this motion in recent weeks. There has been a lot of back and forth this morning, and that is fine, but I guess if the livestock industry had been listening in this morning, it would not be too thrilled with what it heard and the level of debate, to be honest. Let us go back to where this came from. The minister did not say much at all for a while after foot-and-mouth disease arrived in Indonesia, and the livestock sector was very uncertain about what that meant. How likely is it to get here? What is the most likely way it will get here? The industry did not know. What would happen if it did get here? Again, we were not sure. Are the state and federal governments prepared to keep it out? There is uncertainty. Are the state and federal governments prepared for an outbreak?

**Hon Darren West:** It's a federal responsibility.

**Hon STEVE MARTIN:** A federal responsibility, really? Okay. That is interesting. It is a shared responsibility, and the member should know better.

There was a lot of uncertainty in the livestock sector about what this meant. It had been aware that FMD was a real threat, but now it was closer; it was on our doorstep, in Indonesia and Bali. There are thousands and thousands of people travelling back and forth from Bali to Western Australia per month. FMD is real, and it is on our doorstep. We did not hear much from the minister. Then, what did she say? I refer to an article that appeared in *The West Australian* on 22 July in which she is quoted as saying —

“I know this isn't the line that newspapers want to hear but we've got to keep this in perspective,”

This is one of the first public comments we heard from the minister. The article continues —

“We're not going to see all of our cattle industry decimated. We will still have a domestic industry.

The vast bulk of it is gone, but that is okay; we will still have a domestic industry.

**Hon Darren West:** Are you saying that is wrong?

**Hon STEVE MARTIN:** I would not say to a newspaper that it would not be catastrophic. That means “not much to see here”. We will lose the export trade, but that is okay. Members can imagine the response —

Several members interjected.

**Hon STEVE MARTIN:** I have a minute and a half left. I am not taking interjections.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order, members! The member has indicated that he is not taking interjections. I trust that you will respect that.

**Hon STEVE MARTIN:** Members can imagine the response from the livestock sector—the abattoir workers and the truck drivers. It shut down immediately. I would not have said it would not be catastrophic. That is what the minister said. That was one of her first comments. She reeled that back quickly, but that is what she said. The livestock sector knew that most of that was nonsense, and that is okay. They were nervous and they were under threat, but they knew that most of what the minister said in that instance was wrong. But there was another audience who heard what the minister said. They were the people who go back and forth from Perth to Bali. They heard the minister say, “Not much to see here. Food will be cheaper.” The people in the suburbs flying back and forth from Bali were bringing back a sausage roll and other food in their backpack. They heard the Minister for Agriculture

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and Food say, “Nothing much to see here. It is okay.” That was the message. That is the audience that heard that message from the minister. It was inappropriate. By the way, if that was the minister’s first effort, she would not have had the same response, but it was on the back of all the other times the minister clearly has not had the agriculture industry’s back. I will turn back to livestock trade.

**Hon Kyle McGinn:** Here we go.

**Hon STEVE MARTIN:** It is important. If the member wants to downplay it, knock yourself out, but this is a serious \$200 million industry for the truck drivers and the livestock farmers in Western Australia, and this minister has never had the industry’s back.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon STEVE MARTIN:** Several years ago, a huge crowd attended a forum at Katanning about the live sheep trade. The minister gave the benefit of her wisdom and told the livestock farmers where they were going wrong. The live sheep trade was failing and diminishing and she was telling us where it was going wrong. It is time for her to go.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.