

Hon Rick Mazza; Hon James Chown; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Acting President; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

AGRICULTURE — FARMING ENTERPRISES

Motion

HON RICK MAZZA (Agricultural) [1.06 pm]: I move —

That this house acknowledges the agriculture sector as an essential service and recognises impediments that impact farming enterprises including, but not limited to —

- (a) trespass by activists;
- (b) environmental green tape;
- (c) supermarket purchasing power; and
- (d) nuisance neighbours

and the need for protection of primary producers' right to farm.

One thing that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted is that food security is paramount in a crisis. We take it for granted that food and other products will be available on the shelves when we need them. We saw shortages of certain product lines, such as pasta, rice and mincemeat. That created some panic when people went to the supermarket and found that they were in short supply. Obviously food is essential to life, and I think this pandemic has highlighted that, so it is timely that we have more focus on supporting our food producers.

The vast majority of people do not produce their own food, so it is just as well that the average farmer produces enough food for 600 people. In addition to that, Australia is a net exporter of produce. Of the approximately \$58 billion worth of food and fibre that was produced in 2015–16, 77 per cent—or approximately \$45 million worth—was exported. The current tensions with our major trading partner, China, with an 80 per cent tariff being placed on Australian barley and a reduction of imports of Australian beef, highlight the need for diversification of our international markets. The Minister for Agriculture and Food pointed that out yesterday in a ministerial statement she provided to the house.

Over the last few days, iron ore prices have been around \$US95 a tonne because Brazil's iron ore production is down due to COVID-19. As I understand it, China wants to embark on a major infrastructure program and needs iron ore, but we should not rely on one commodity, such as iron ore, when we are in such a precarious situation. If everything goes to hell in a handbasket, we cannot eat iron ore; we need food. Australian farmers produce beef, lamb, chicken, pork, fish, sugar, eggs, honey, grains, forestry, wheat, wool, dairy and fruit and vegetables, just to name a few. Interestingly, Australians on average consume around 26 kilograms of beef per person per year and eat 45.3 kilograms of chicken per person per year, so we are one of the largest chicken consumers in the world. I think there is little scope to argue that agriculture is not an essential service, both in feeding the state and being traded as a commodity around the world. It is an industry that quite rightly needs to be supported. That was highlighted in a statement the federal agriculture minister, David Littleproud, put out in March this year. He stated —

“As far as the Commonwealth is concerned, food production and supply is an essential service.

“Feeding our nation is an essential service.

I agree wholeheartedly with that.

One thing that has impeded agricultural production in recent years has been trespass by activists. Agriculture is not without its detractors, whether that be anti-live export groups, environmental protesters or, more recently, vegan activists. Farmers do not deserve to have this type of pressure put on them. Most are family-operated enterprises. Animal activist groups like Aussie Farms, which uploaded a website that included a map pinpointing different farms around Australia as targets for activists, I think would put a fair bit of fear into primary producers. Notwithstanding that the federal government said that it was outraged by that and it was going to take down that website, I looked this morning and the website is still active. It is still there highlighting a number of farms in Western Australia, whether they are sheep farms, piggeries or farms with meat, chicken or eggs—the whole lot. It is really disappointing that the federal government has not been able to take down that website. I am sure that there are a few farmers who would be concerned about an invasion of their property.

I am sure it is very unnerving for farmers when animal activists invade a farm. That occurred in Queensland, I think, last year. There was one article that stated that 150 animal activists entered a family farm with a single farmer on it.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: The 150, was that in WA?

Hon RICK MAZZA: No, it was in Queensland, minister. All around Australia different farmers are being impacted by these people.

Hon Rick Mazza; Hon James Chown; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Acting President; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

The farmer, whose name is David McNamara, lives with his family on a farm called Lemontree Dairy and feedlot. He called the incident, in which dozens of activists stormed onto his farm, taking photos of his cows and posing in group shots, as extremely distressing. I agree with him. It would be quite confronting to have all those people enter a farm, particularly if it is in a remote location.

In May last year, the Attorney General, John Quigley, promised tougher penalties for these types of farm invasions when he referred to these activists, and I quote —

“I don’t know what the mushy-headed vegans think, or why they think, but they better get this through their mushy heads: that we’re changing the law in a substantial way that spells trouble, big trouble, for anyone who goes trespassing on agricultural land with the intention of disrupting agricultural production,” ...

Disappointingly, we have not progressed very far with that. There was an invasion on a farm down at Benger, in the south west, in which a calf was stolen. The current penalties do not really dissuade vegan activists.

There has been a consultation paper, the draft Animal Welfare and Trespass Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. If my memory serves me right, the proposal was that penalties would be increased to \$24 000 or two years’ jail and restraining orders could be imposed as well. To add insult to injury, it also includes a proposal for designated inspectors, which this house rejected last year as part of the debate on the Animal Welfare Act. I tried to find that on the website today to familiarise myself with it, but I could not find it. It looks as though that particular bill has been taken down.

By contrast, New South Wales passed the Right to Farm Bill 2019, which provides for a penalty of up to \$22 000 or imprisonment for three years or both if —

- (i) the offender was accompanied by 2 or more persons when the offence occurred, or
- (ii) the offender did something that gave rise to a serious risk to the safety of the offender or any other person on the inclosed land.

Doubling the penalties in WA, however, will do little to deter people unless there is a prohibition on crowdfunding to pay fines or magistrates start to hand down some jail time.

Farmers manage 48 per cent of our land mass and are on the front line when it comes to land management and delivering environmental outcomes on behalf of the broader community. I know a number of farmers who work with groups such as Landcare and fence off part of their farms in an effort to preserve flora and fauna. I know on my own farm, where there is a very comprehensive feral cat control program, we see a lot of wildlife like echidnas, southern brown bandicoots, possums, quendas, and an abundance of small native birds like robin redbreasts, blue wrens and rosellas. Like a lot of farmers, I like to see that wildlife around, but that takes a bit of work.

It is unfortunate that farmers have been subjected to overbearing environmental laws, not the least being environmentally sensitive areas, or ESAs. That has had catastrophic effects on some farmers, not the least being Peter Swift who fell foul of the ESA legislation. Peter Swift was featured in an article in the *Countryman* last year, which states, in part —

The plight of a Cranbrook farmer who purchased land only to find himself embroiled in a bureaucratic and legal nightmare has sparked a parliamentary inquiry into private property rights.

Peter Swift, a former diesel mechanic, fulfilled his dreams by buying his own farm 12 years ago but said he had been “living a nightmare” since.

Shortly after the purchase, the State Government deemed 200ha of his 485ha property to be an Environmentally Sensitive Area, despite it being zoned as rural farmland by the Cranbrook Shire Council and carrying no ESA when he bought the property.

The ESA means he cannot graze cattle and therefore earn an income from almost half of his property.

Although a grazing permit can be issued, these apply for just two to five years and at any time can be revoked, meaning there was too much uncertainty to buy livestock ...

Peter Swift lost his farm; he was not able to continue financially. Fortunately, he is continuing to live there under some arrangement, but that environmental impediment impacted on him greatly. I know other farmers who have also suffered distress over ESAs. In fact, a number of farmers have contacted me saying that they have re-cleared regrowth. As part of crop rotation programs on some very large farms, it might be a number of years before farmers re-crop a paddock, but because they have ploughed on regrowth on that paddock, they fall foul of the authorities and are in a very distressed state when penalties are presented to them.

The issue of overbearing environmental green tape is not just a condition for Australia. WAFarmers also featured in an article on its website, titled “European Anti Farming NGOs Coming To A Farm Near You” by Trevor Whittington, which states —

Hon Rick Mazza; Hon James Chown; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Acting President; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

European agriculture is drowning in a sea of red and green tape driven by activist anti-farming Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) which are slowly but surely shutting down their farmer's right to farm.

Green groups such as PETA and Greenpeace have been quietly working away since the 1960s pressuring European bureaucrats with claims that modern agricultural practices were endangering the environment, the rights of animals; and the world's food security and food safety.

Offering instead, a nirvana of a pre-war world of idealistic rural farming, of local produce supplying the local village ...

As I mentioned earlier, one Australian farmer feeds 600 people. The idea of subsistence farming, I think, is well and truly gone. Unfortunately, a lot of that pressure and that green tape has come to bear in Australia. That has been recognised. This coronavirus has highlighted a few things. It has been recognised by the federal government. The federal environment minister, Sussan Ley, has said that the federal government will look at a report on restrictive environmental regulations. She stated in her media statement that regulations have grown four and a half times since 2000. There are a lot of impediments in people's way these days.

A lot has been said about supermarket purchasing power, particularly around milk and eggs. Dairy farmers have been under a lot of pressure for some time since the introduction of the \$1 a litre price for fresh milk, which supermarkets used as a loss leader to get people into their supermarkets. Of course, they put pressure on processors, who in turn put pressure on the farm gate price. When we hear about dairy farmers getting less money for their milk than it costs to produce it, and getting out of bed at four o'clock in the morning to effectively run at a loss, it is pretty heart-wrenching stuff. It is unsustainable; there is no way in the world that they can continue to do that. In fact, in a number of reports, some dairy farmers have said that they have sent their herds, the genetics of which had been built up over a long time, to slaughter because they could not continue. One of those dairy farms in Cowaramup had been operating for 90 years but was unable to continue.

The same issue has affected the egg industry. John Bell commented that supermarkets, with their enormous marketing power, were paying only about \$3 for a dozen eggs. He was finding it very difficult to maintain production, particularly when the drought over east had pushed up feed prices and things were pretty tough for him. Interestingly, New South Wales farmers have put out an article titled "Who's eating Australian farmers' profits?" It states —

AUSTRALIA has the most concentrated supermarket sector in the world, with a 70% market share for Coles and Woolworths, and 90% market share in the hands of just four supermarkets. It means Australian farmers are exposed to highly concentrated domestic markets with these powerful supermarkets and processors.

Having to deal with large organisations with significant market and bargaining power has meant farmers' margins have been squeezed, often to below the cost of production. Supermarkets have introduced private labels and exclusive supply chains, entrenching their power and reducing competition.

Regulators have failed to curb this excessive power, creating significant detriment to less powerful suppliers such as farmers ...

I know that the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has tried on a few occasions to deal with that and it has not been too successful. I am all for free enterprise. Do not get me wrong; free enterprise and supply and demand are fine, but this is out of kilter with free enterprise. These few supermarket chains are able to manipulate the market, and we have to be very mindful of that.

What has puzzled me is that we have had an enormous demand for Australian baby formula, which has been shipped offshore in container loads, sometimes causing a shortage of the product here. A little while ago there was some talk about the construction of a baby formula processor in the south west. I have not seen much about that for 12 months or so. It puzzles me that we have such an ability here to produce dairy but a processor has not entered the market to produce baby formula. All the south west, from basically Pinjarra right through to Dardanup and even further south, was developed in the early part of last century as a dairy area. There were channels in from Wellington Dam—when it was not salty—to irrigate the land for dairy. Back in the day, as a primary school kid in Harvey, I remember that dozens of farmers' sons and daughters attended that school because of the very vibrant dairy industry there.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: It's a size and scale issue.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Yes. The other issue affecting farmers is nuisance neighbours. Noting the time that I have left, I will touch on this only a little. Nuisance neighbours are people who are looking for a tree change. They move to a rural area looking for serenity, but find that next door to them is a very dusty, noisy and smelly agricultural operation, so they start to complain. One chief executive officer from a country shire said to me that they move to the country expecting serenity but they do not get it. Then they complain to the council, and when they do not get any action from the council, they get themselves elected onto the council. He said that that is starting to create

Hon Rick Mazza; Hon James Chown; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Acting President; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

some real problems for country Western Australia. Nuisance neighbours are an issue that people who support right-to-farm protection have been trying to deal with for some time.

I know of efforts to get right-to-farm legislation throughout Australia. In 1991, Western Australia had an inquiry into the matter. The Legislative Assembly's Select Committee on the Right to Farm was chaired by Hon Monty House, MLA. The committee report was tabled in 1991 and contained 36 recommendations. It makes for some quite interesting reading. By the look of it, some of those recommendations were implemented and then later repealed, but I do not think any serious right-to-farm legislation has been put in place.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon RICK MAZZA: I have not got much time left, minister, so I will carry on. In 2009, a private member's bill passed through the South Australian Legislative Council but failed in the House of Assembly. In 2004, New South Wales also had a private member's bill that failed. Last year, New South Wales passed the Right to Farm Bill 2019. The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party has had that as a core policy of its agricultural policy for some time. In his contribution to the second reading debate, my colleague in New South Wales, Hon Robert Borsak, said —

It is about time this State saw a right to farm bill. The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party welcomes the Right to Farm Bill 2019. The party has long demanded and campaigned for a right to farm bill as the bare minimum for the protection of farmers.

He went on to talk about how farm terrorism is on the rise throughout Australia and how he is glad that that legislation has been put in place. New South Wales saw fit last year to finally pass right-to-farm legislation, which has been enacted to deal with many issues surrounding activists. I have no doubt that it is very important for Western Australia to make sure that it protects its farmers. Food and fibre producers are often neglected at times as far as road and rail infrastructure is concerned. They have to make their way through red tape, along with green tape and other impediments.

I commend the motion to the house and I look forward to contributions from other members.

HON JIM CHOWN (Agricultural) [1.26 pm]: Let me first congratulate Hon Rick Mazza for his motion today. It is timely and I certainly hope it gets support from the house for the matters he has raised in the motion on the agricultural sector. Let me start by briefly talking about *Isaac and James Doust and Descendants*, a publication with which I am sure members are familiar. I will use this publication to highlight what some of our early settlers put up with when they arrived in this country.

The PRESIDENT: They were sturdy stock, I might say.

Hon JIM CHOWN: Absolutely, Madam President. I do not disagree with you at all. This book tells the story of two brothers, Isaac and James. Isaac came to Western Australia with his wife and two small children. They set sail from England in 1842 as early settlers heading to the fledgling colony of Western Australia. They sailed on the *Simon Taylor*, a cargo ship that had been refitted to carry both cargo and passengers. There were 242 passengers on board and all but two arrived safely in Fremantle on 20 August 1842. The *Simon Taylor* moored at Bathers Beach—I am sure that some members will be familiar with where that is, but I am not—and as there was yet to be built a jetty suitable for the ship to tie up alongside, passengers were rowed to shore to set foot in Western Australia after four months at sea.

In 2015, at the time of printing, some eighth-generation Doust children were born in Western Australia. In fact, my research officer, Kylie Watkinson, nee Doust, along with Madam President, are also found in the book in the family tree. When this particular motion of Hon Rick Mazza's came up for debate, Kylie brought to my attention some interesting facts in the book about agricultural endeavours and exports. In 1848, exports from this colony amounted to £29 598, of which the majority was sandalwood, which equated to £13 353. Interestingly, in October 1848 a census was taken in the Western Australian colony that showed the population of the colony was 4 622 people. In 2019, 172 years later, we had a total population of 2.72 million, of whom 50.3 per cent were male and 49.7 per cent were female. In 1848, according to the census, there were 141 000 sheep, 10 900 cattle, 2 095 horses and 2 287 swine. Today, as I said, 172 years later, we have 14.5 million sheep. Our beef herd numbers approximately two million. The sheep industry contributes over half of the gross value of agricultural production from all livestock industries in the state, and this is made up of almost a billion dollars in wool and half a billion dollars in sheep meat, including live exports. What I am saying to this house is that we have come a long way in 172 years. The agricultural sector is certainly a significant part of our economy, generating anywhere between \$10 billion and \$15 billion a year. This figure can be expanded four times considering its benefit to the economy at large as primary producers spend those moneys on a plethora of things required for the industry. Agriculture is a significant business and today, even with a population of 2.8 million people, it is actually run by a very small cohort of the Western Australian population. Today, agriculture is a profession. Agricultural producers are as professional as surgeons, doctors, lawyers, ministers or politicians; agriculture is a very professional organisation. It operates on extremely slim margins and competes

Hon Rick Mazza; Hon James Chown; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Acting President; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

in a global environment. For example, as I have said before, in my electorate around 1994, there were approximately 10 700 grain growers. At the turn of the century, there were some 8 500 grain growers. Today, there are approximately 3 800 to 4 000 grain growers, yet the same area of land is under cultivation. Talking about cultivated areas, I will hark back to the Doust publication. In 1848, there were 3 317 acres of land under cultivation. That included 672 acres of barley and 134 acres of oats. Today, our grain production is on average 11.5 million tonnes per annum and some record years have produced up to 16.5 million tonnes. The major contributions to our exports are wheat, barley, canola, oats and lupins. Vegetable production has also increased exponentially over 172 years. In 2013—I am sure it is a bit higher today—it was worth around \$350 million.

Going forward as not only a state but also a nation, a number of the issues we will face were touched on by Hon Rick Mazza and I will probably expand on the motion as it has been set out in this place, considering that by 2050, Australia could possibly have a population of 38 million people. The population in this state could be around 3.5 million to 4.5 million people, as opposed to nearly three million people today.

As a society with one of the highest standards of living in the world—not only Western Australia, but also nationally—food is taken for granted. We take it for granted that when we go to the supermarket, our requirements will be there and we can purchase them and take them home. Of course, that was not the case 172 years ago. Food was considered to be critical. It was essential and our early pioneers fought hard to put enough food on the table on a daily basis. We live at a time when the world population has never experienced that. I believe we are under significant threat from people who do not understand what food production is about. For example, if we have a population of 38 million people, we need to remember that the average person in this country consumes 2.5 kilograms of food a day. I was surprised by that figure—2.5 kilos is a lot of food—but it is actually a conservative figure. Some health websites say it is more like three kilos a person a day, but I will use the example of 2.5 kilos a person a day. Obviously, some people eat a lot more than I do! If our population is around 38 million people by 2050, that means we will be consuming 95 000 tonnes of food a day, or 35 million tonnes of food annually.

As Hon Rick Mazza pointed out, during the COVID-19 crisis when we had that month of desperation when toilet paper could not be seen on the shelves, people panicked unreasonably. Probably two and a half weeks after the initial impact on our supermarkets, I had cause to be in my local IGA. I expected that supermarket to be pretty well fully stocked, but possibly without a lot of toilet paper and tissues. I was absolutely surprised that the shelving was virtually bare of rice, tinned goods, fish and pasta—anything non-perishable. This was a good week or so after the initial panic buying. There was very little selection if people wanted to buy canned food. There was plenty of fresh produce, I might add. It was missing stuff people could store on the shelf—non-perishables. That made me wonder. Of course, most of that stuff is generated in the eastern states. I have since found out that given everything that comes from the eastern states, if our border was closed and transport was not allowed across the border, we would have eight to 10 days of those sorts of food products available. Fortunately, that crisis did not happen, but the food on the shelves that we take for granted is not assured; it is not guaranteed.

The Australian government's Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment website notes an interesting trend about food. From 1989 to 2017—a 28-year span—food production increased from \$65 billion worth to \$117 billion, which is a massive increase. It drew to my attention that food imports into this country over that period increased from \$4 billion per annum to \$14 billion per annum. That raises the question: if we are importing \$14 billion of food today, I could assume that by 2050 we would import \$30 billion to \$40 billion of food. We all know that food security is absolutely sacrosanct if we are going to have a stable, growing population. I certainly believe that the Chinese government needs to take that into consideration when it wants to possibly entertain putting tariffs on food out of this country at some stage in the future, but that is a matter that needs to be discussed at higher levels.

In saying that, the right to farm and a bill of such ilk is certainly long overdue. I congratulate the government of New South Wales for putting forward such a bill and its carriage through both houses of Parliament.

Farmers today are under enormous pressure from the climate and from activists, and at times they are seen by the public as not doing the right thing. As I have said before, farmers are professionally going about their business and they are very sensitive to the fact that they need to be seen to be doing so in an environmentally responsible manner. There has been a number of issues with vegan activists imposing their will on innocent farmers who are carrying out their lawful business. I will not repeat the words of Hon John Quigley, which Hon Rick Mazza put in *Hansard*, but a farm trespass and animal welfare bill is out for public comment. Comments attributed to the Attorney General in his press release state —

The McGowan Government is committed to introducing legislation that not only protects primary industry—particularly regional farming families—but also enhances inspection powers in order to ensure community confidence in the welfare of animals in abattoirs, knackeries and other relevant facilities.

Hon Rick Mazza; Hon James Chown; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Acting President; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

The Attorney General is saying that he will give regional farming families in particular some protection under the draft Animal Welfare and Trespass Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. As clause 37 of the draft bill states, that is only “if the inspector is a designated general inspector, to monitor compliance with part 3”. We have been here before—this is legislative blackmail by the Attorney General. He is not prepared to go the hard yards on behalf of the agricultural community in this state unless they are prepared to bow down and take on designated general inspectors. That debate took place during the Animal Welfare Amendment Bill 2017 and was not entertained by this house. In reality, I do not think it is good enough for a senior member of government to come out with a draft paper that in effect will not accomplish the protection that agriculture requires in this day and age.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon JIM CHOWN: I am not taking interjections, minister; I have five minutes left. I will be more than happy for the minister to get to her feet in due course.

An election commitment by the New South Wales government stated that it would have a Right to Farm Bill. That Right to Farm Bill, quite frankly, is worthy of consideration. I certainly hope that a future Liberal government takes it on board, and if it copies it word for word, it would be a fantastic outcome for agriculture in this state. Deputy Premier; Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade, John Barilaro, said the bill would help address increasing attacks on farming families. I quote John Barilaro —

“The people of NSW have had a gutful of vile attacks against our farming families. This legislation is all about sending the clearest possible message: enough is enough,” ...

“If you invade a farm in NSW you will face up to three years behind bars.

...

“We are telling our farmers today ‘we value the work you do and we will protect you and your families from these criminals,’ ...

“Here in NSW we back our farmers 100 per cent ...

It is not happening today, as I have just expanded on, from our Attorney General. In fact, I do not know when a bill will be introduced.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon JIM CHOWN: I am happy to hear from the minister later. The quote continues —

... we’d have the toughest penalties for those that decide to wreak havoc on our primary producers,” ...

“If you’re farming legally, and have so for many years, you’re not going to cop a nuisance claim and potential legal action just because some folks from the city moved next door and decided they didn’t like the sound of your dairy cows.”

That is outstanding. As I said, our population is going to expand and expand. It will encroach on very fertile farmland along the coastline. It has happened already and it needs to stop. These people have put their lifetime—generations—into this professional industry and they do require some protection from those people. I have absolutely no problem with them buying farm lots or lifestyle lots, but as long as they understand that they are buying into an industry area that has been doing their thing for many years. I would hate to see in this state something that took place in New South Wales; that is, a dairy farmer’s neighbour complained about what he was feeding his cattle. It was actually vegetables and old fruit—it was after a flood; there was no feed for them. The neighbour went to the local council and complained about the smell. Under its by-laws, the council said he had to remove it, otherwise it would close him down. He removed the feed. Then he paid a lot of money at the time to feed the cows hay and grain. The same people who had just moved next door complained about the smell of cow manure and the noise the cows were making! The local government by-laws drove him off his property.

That was one of the main triggers for this right to farm legislation in New South Wales. I am not aware of a situation along those lines in Western Australia, but I do not think it is far away. We have environmental issues with abattoirs and feedlots. I experienced that earlier in my life as a member here when a particular feedlot at Narrogin was finally closed down for environmental reasons. A young couple had put their life savings into it and they were forced off that feedlot and went broke. They had all the initial environmental approvals, except one.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Is this in New South Wales? What is John Barilaro doing about that?

Hon JIM CHOWN: I am talking about here in Western Australia. Keep up, minister, please!

In saying that, with a few seconds left, I certainly hope that we seriously consider agriculture going forward, the increasing population and the increasing requirements with regard to the growing of food, and legislation comes forward from either this government or a Liberal government to give absolute protection similar to that in

Hon Rick Mazza; Hon James Chown; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Acting President; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

New South Wales to those people who have spent generations and a lifetime in an industry that is here for not only their benefit but also the benefit of the population at large.

HON DIANE EVERS (South West) [1.46 pm]: I thank Hon Rick Mazza for moving this motion. It is an issue we all need to know about and to discuss. We need to make sure that out there in the rest of the state people are aware of how essential food is to us. If they do not know already, I am sure this past couple of months has brought it to their attention. We need to support our farming industry and we need to support our farmers. We need the food. We know that is very important. Within the Greens' agriculture and food policies, we go on about this in much more detail than I will here, but it is something that we highly value and we recognise it can be done very well.

First off in this motion, Hon Rick Mazza raises the idea of trespass by activists. I understand how difficult this is for farmers. I know the problems that can occur when this goes wrong. I also understand that there were only a few cases just before the last federal election, which got a lot of press and a lot of notoriety. It was the big thing that everyone was talking about, yet, in the whole scale of things it was not a huge activity. We have to look beyond those few people who went on farms and caused some damage and caused some issues and look at why there were people backing them up and saying this is important. What they say is important is, "We want animals treated well. We want animal welfare laws to be upheld and abided by." The legislation to be introduced will include inspections. We need independent, accessible, thorough monitoring and inspection services. For the most part, the legislation is for intensive animal systems. I expect that every farmer would want people to operate at a level that is important for animals. These inspections are not to pick up every single tiny issue that might be happening, because we know that lots of things happen with livestock, but minimal standards have to be upheld. That is what we need and that is what vegan activists need. They want to know that the minimum standards that we in this chamber have put in place via legislation are upheld by an inspection service. That way, farmers, the livestock managers who are doing the right thing, have certainty. Regulations are put in place to keep a standard level. If somebody breaks the law and does the wrong thing in order to undercut or make a larger profit for themselves at the expense of the animal, or their competitors, those regulations should be there to make sure that standards are upheld. I do not see an issue with bringing in an independent inspection service so that we can provide that inspection service for all those farmers out there who are doing the right thing.

That leads me to my second point, which is environmental green tape. Those regulations are put in place by people in this room and they are there for a reason. They are the minimum standards to ensure that we are looking after the planet. The regulations are there for the general population who need to be educated about how to manage animals, and they are the standards that we have put in place for regulating the land and the soil, access to water and chemical usage. We all need to be educated about that, but farmers need it specifically because they are the ones who are on site managing this stuff. We need those regulations in place to protect the environment. If something is wrong with the regulations because they are unfair or are not upheld or do not deal with everyone equally, they must come back here and be looked at, and we must ask ourselves whether they are right, whether they do what was intended and whether we should amend them. That is what government is for. We need to make those changes as needed. We need to make sure that not only the general population, but also the land managers are educated about the regulations and therefore understand why they have been put in place. Possibly the land managers who have the regulations imposed on them do not understand why they are there, why they should implement them on their land and what the benefits of doing that are for the general population. We could provide better education along those lines. Could we do that through the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development? I believe that there is a lot of scope for the department to help land managers manage the regulations that they have to put up with. The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation could do the same. Maybe an overhaul is needed to have conversations between the landowners and the regulators. There would be a benefit to doing that.

In addition, I want to refer to some of the regulations that have been put in place. I heard recently that the Forest Products Commission is still deciding on whether it is time to harvest the sandalwood plantations. Of course, the FPC's plantations are not ready so more regulations have come into place for people who planted these plantations 20 years ago or more. As Hon Jim Chown said, the sandalwood plantations have been part of our culture for a lot longer than 20 years. People who planted sandalwood plantations have had regulations foisted on them over the past couple of years—I think in 2016, under the previous government—that made it more difficult for them to harvest those plantations. Why would a farmer invest in a long-term industry such as the plantation industry if they thought regulations could come along at any time and make it difficult? We in this room need to be cognisant of that and make sure that the people who enter the plantation industry have reason to believe that the regulations that are in place will remain in place when the time comes to harvest their plantations. We need a deliberative process whereby people can work out the regulations they are most comfortable with rather than just having them imposed on them and then the regulations being fought against, upheld, fought against and then overturned. Whatever the process is, it does not seem to be working. More collaborative work on the regulations is needed not only in this room, but also when dealing with the wider public.

Hon Rick Mazza; Hon James Chown; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Acting President; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

As for the supermarket purchasing power—wow! Who would have thought when we went to a free market system in the belief that the free market would solve everything that we would end up with a grocery duopoly? We have two corporates that really work as one, in many ways. That was not the intention. That is not a free market. Something has gone wrong and it must be fixed, but we cannot fix it here. All we can do is support the farmers who are being pushed, bullied and hounded by the larger forces that determine the price for them and make it unreasonable and impossible for farmers to turn a profit. We need to support farmers so that they can continue to farm. The dairy industry has been talking about what can be done to expand the dairy industry for as long as I have been involved, which is more than 20 years. We produce milk, yet from milk we can make so many other products such as long-life milk, powdered milk, cheese and butter. We do not even make our own butter in Western Australia. My husband made butter on the farm that he grew up on when he was a kid. Why can we not make our own butter? There are niche markets, of course, but it comes back to the matter of scale and size, as Hon Dr Steve Thomas said earlier. During this whole COVID nightmare that we are going through, we have learnt that maybe there is something more important than profit. Maybe we want to be certain that we have food security, as Hon Jim Chown said, and to make in Western Australia the things this state needs. We can then make more of it for export to bring in extra dollars. Maybe it will cost a little more to make the butter here, but a lot of Western Australian residents go for the Buy West Eat Best products. We are waking up. Younger people who have access to funds—I appreciate that one of the things brought on by COVID is whether young people have enough money to live above the poverty line for a period of time—are able to make good decisions and are pushing for good environmental outcomes. They realise that there is a future ahead and they are willing to spend a little more to have almond milk in their coffee because they do not want dairy, for example. They will spend more to buy a nice, clean, beautiful avocado rather than a bruised one. They are thinking in a way that my generation did not. We wanted to look for the best price and make the most profit. A lot of people are waking up to the fact that there is more to it than just profit.

That brings me to the matter of nuisance neighbours. In my first month or two in this place, I raised in a GM petition that I presented the matter of farm neighbours who were not getting along. The ones we are talking about today are the city slickers who move to the country and then say that they do not like the smell of cows. Okay, that can happen. In regional areas, we need a simple mechanism so that neighbours can talk to their neighbours with a mediator or an arbitrator to help lead the conversation so the neighbours can work out their disputes between themselves. We do not want people to go broke and have to move. I recognise that some people dream of owning a small hobby farm, but the dream quickly curdles when they realise that they cannot make a profit and the farm turns to weeds. Some farmers, or even managers of state-owned land, might not be controlling the feral animals on their property. Rather than have one neighbour take the other neighbour to court in a long, drawn-out process, why not offer a mediation service to the neighbours to help them work through the issues? We need to do something that might not have been thought about in the past but that can be done.

That leads me to the need to protect a primary producer's right to farm. Yes, please. We want people to farm. That is the whole point because that is how we get our food.

Hon Jim Chown: Do you support a bill that gives farmers a right to farm?

Hon DIANE EVERS: I would have to see the detail of it before I could tell the member.

We are going full throttle into climate change yet we are still trying to allocate water like we did in 1914, whereby whoever comes in first has the best chance of getting the best access to it. We are allocating water from underneath forests without regard to the needs of the forests or where the water was travelling to underground. We need a new process and a whole new water act. I know it is in the process of getting there, but things move slowly here. Nobody can deny that. Sometimes they move fast—I get it—but it surprises me that I have to say the same thing over and over again, but that is what it takes. We need a new water act to look at how we can allocate water into the future.

We need so much more, but the last thing I will leave members with is the need to support our Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. For the last 10 years, I have seen it diminished, and that hurts because it used to have so much to do and so much to offer. The farmers could go to the department and they knew the people who worked there. The hydrologists who worked there were beyond compare. They knew what they were doing and they understood the systems. We have to revitalise that. If we want our landscape to survive, we have to work with the landowners. We have to encourage those city slickers to go out into the regions and develop farms because we do not need the mega farms of monoculture. We need variety, we need diversity, we need multiple incomes from farms and we need multiple industries on farms to provide job opportunities for people who might want to move out of the city. One thing we saw in the past two months was people wanting to get out of the city and into the regions. There was such a strong pull for those people that we had to close the borders and tell them they could not go unless they had a really good reason to do so. That could continue. We do not know. At this point, it is way too early to predict. The same phenomenon happened around the world. People started to move into the country because they knew that, just like the cruise ships, the cities were a Petri dish. I hate to say that because it

Hon Rick Mazza; Hon James Chown; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Acting President; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

has been said many times. The cities were the places where the disease spread the easiest and quickest because many people were in such close quarters. People wanted to move out and they took it with them. Luckily, that did not happen here. I am very pleased to be standing here commenting on that.

I would like to see us supporting a very well resourced, innovative, forward-focused Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development because our future and our food security depend on it. It is not something we can leave to private industry because, by its make-up, private industry's goal is to make a profit for its owners. There is more to it than that. Many people are waking up and realising there is more to it than that. That is what I would like to see in the future.

Again, thank you Hon Rick Mazza for bringing on this motion. I do not think enough can be said in support of the people who work on the land, often for very little return, and keep providing us with healthy nutritious food.

HON AARON STONEHOUSE (South Metropolitan) [2.01 pm]: I am very happy to rise in support of a motion that calls for recognition and support of the agricultural sector. One of the previous speakers spoke about how Western Australia—I might be paraphrasing here a little bit—was built by hardy pioneers, people who came out here with very little and built something great out of it. I am reminded of the story of the MacDonalds and the McKenzies.

Hon Rick Mazza interjected.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Right. In 1883 they drove some 700 head of cattle from New South Wales all the way to the top end of Western Australia to the Fossil Downs cattle station.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: There may have been many more involved, but I cannot list them all. I know this story only superficially. Some 5 600 kilometres is one of the longest, if not the longest, cattle drives in Australian history, I believe. That is remarkable—it took them three years. In 1883, they went from New South Wales to the top end of Western Australia driving 700 cattle, half of which they lost along the way. They lost all their horses and there were a few human casualties on the drive. That is testimony, I think, to the pioneer spirit Western Australians and, indeed, all Australians have. It is a hard country and it took hard men and women to tame it. It is hard to imagine in the late nineteenth century, before mechanised farming existed, what it was like clearing land by hand, burning tree stumps. That people were able to do it in remote areas and very harsh conditions is a testament to their strength of character, resourcefulness and determination. I am admittedly a city boy who has not spent much time in the country, but when talking to folks in the agricultural sector, I am struck that that same spirit persists today—that resourcefulness, determination and strength of character.

An opposition member: Innovation.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Yes, their innovation and entrepreneurship. These are people who, contrary to what some may think, are not looking for a handout; they are people who are willing to work hard for what they have. A lot of the time these guys just want to be left alone so they can get on with their important work. Folks in the agricultural sector absolutely deserve our respect, adoration, admiration and support.

There are a few areas specified in the motion that we are considering now, but I would like to touch on a couple that I think are really important—namely, water rights and property rights. I think it is really tough for folks in the agricultural sector right now because water rights really are not that secure. People's water allowances can be cut and there is no mandatory compensation for them. A lot of folks are facing really punitive cuts to their water licences and there is no compensation from the state government. In any other area, if property is taken from us by the government, we are owed some form of compensation. It is a recognised right that our property cannot be taken without some compensation. That is not the case with water rights. We also lack any sort of workable system whereby people can trade their water. It is possible to do that currently, but it is a cumbersome system and full of bureaucracy. We are lacking a true market for water trading right now.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: Folks who are facing water cuts do not have a simple way to purchase water from their neighbours or to sell their water rights to their neighbours.

When we look at property rights, we see real issues. For a start, the government is seeking to expand our national parks to this arbitrary number of five million hectares. Where it got that number from, I do not know. That puts a lot of folks on edge. The government will pursue an arbitrary target of national parks that threatens property rights.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: They were stations up north that were already part of a design. They were abandoned stations that nobody was managing.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Bought in the 90s.

Hon Rick Mazza; Hon James Chown; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Acting President; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: This perhaps stretches outside the agricultural sector, but in the resource sector, too, there are folks—explorers and junior miners—who are concerned that national parks will be expanded onto property on which they have leases or bought interests in. Folks are concerned that they do not get to manage their property how they would like to. They own land and want to work it, but they are denied the opportunity to perhaps clear land where they would like and to manage and tend to it in the way they see fit. Folks are constantly wrapped up in green and red tape. There are also concerns that the bureaucratic burden will expand. A bill has been introduced that deals with expanding agricultural produce committees to new industries. People do not need more red tape and more bureaucracy; they need less of it. I am absolutely supportive of this motion.

When we think about the right to farm, we should be thinking about the most fundamental property rights because that is what underpins anyone's ability to do anything. If people are seeking a right to farm; they are seeking secure property and water rights. If they can be secured, there will be certainty for folks in the agricultural sector and they can get on with what they do best with less interference from bureaucrats and politicians in Perth.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural) [2.08 pm]: I am sure the minister will seek the call at any moment and make a very valuable contribution, as usual.

Firstly, I want to say thank you to Hon Rick Mazza for bringing this motion before us. I have no hesitation in indicating support for it. As usual, he has put considerable thought into the motion he has brought before Parliament for us to debate. Obviously, I am very passionate about and a very big fan of our agriculture industry. It is an industry that is incredibly resilient and incredibly clever and innovative, despite the challenges it faces. It is certainly fair to say that this state was built on the back of agriculture. Even in the uncertainty of the COVID-19 crisis, agriculture is still an industry that is out there, doing what it does. It is dealing with the crisis in its own way, but it is still rising to the challenge of delivering the food and fibre that our state and nation need. Indeed, in Western Australia we punch well above our weight. Despite the challenges that the industry faces, we are able to deliver far more than might be expected of a relatively small state, population wise.

As I said, this industry is very smart and very resilient. Our farming businesses are incredibly well run, modern and very diverse. It is a very individual pursuit, no doubt about it. Over every fence one looks, one sees that farmers all do things differently, but that does not mean they are doing things wrong; it is just that there are many ways of doing the job that they do. They all learn from each other and do a very good job. Trade issues are prevalent in the news at the moment. I just hope that the state government and the federal government can show the collegiate nature they displayed in dealing with the COVID crisis to find a way forward with the trade issues facing us that could have a dramatic impact on agriculture in Western Australia. Let us move forward on that.

I want to focus my remarks on a particular aspect of this motion. It will not be any surprise to anyone in the chamber that I will focus my remarks on issues around animal activism and rural crime, particularly trespass. We are no strangers in this place to debates on these issues. Members will recall that I tabled a petition in February last year on rural crime activism and trespass, and the Nationals WA has asked questions on these issues on an almost weekly basis since then, for more than a year. In that time, the government has provided little clarity and a lot of mixed messages on what it intends to do in this space.

Hon Jim Chown: Which really amounts to nothing.

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: Nothing has been done in this space. A little later, I will talk about the draft legislation out for consultation that other members have spoken about.

There were responses to the petition I tabled in this place in February 2019 from the Minister for Agriculture and Food. The minister stated, in a letter to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs dated 11 April 2019 —

At my request, the Attorney General is working on reforms to further support farmers, including courts to impose restraining orders on activists and stronger laws around trespassing on farms and abattoirs.

That is good, but what did we see after that? Not a great deal happened for the rest of that year, although a lot of promises were made in response to many questions asked by members in this place and the other place. The Attorney General also responded to petition 104 in a letter to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs dated 26 July 2019 and stated —

I have noted the concerns raised in the Petition and submissions, and sympathise with those who have been affected by the criminal conduct that has been described. The Government recognises the particular vulnerability of agricultural properties and is committed to ensuring that the justice system is responsive to these issues.

Again, that was later the same year and the government was still committing to do something about it, but taking its time in doing so. We have asked a number of questions and held a number of debates in both places. In the

Hon Rick Mazza; Hon James Chown; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Acting President; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

other place, my colleague the member for Central Wheatbelt raised concerns about the mixed messages that the government was sending in answers to the questions we and others have asked. In one instance she was particularly concerned about the fact that, at the very outset when we first started asking these questions after petition 104 was tabled, the government sort of said, “Nothing to see here; nothing to do. There’s no issue. We don’t need to do anything.” Then later on we heard comments by the Minister for Agriculture and Food, the Attorney General and others, “Oh, actually, now we’re going to introduce some legislation to deal with this. We’re going to tackle this, we’re going to work on it.” The whole time there has been these mixed messages; first there is nothing to see, then the government has something to do. It just seems a constant tactic of delay rather than actually getting on with the job.

Hon Rick Mazza: Mushy-headed.

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: Mushy-headed, like the vegans.

The Attorney General made comments about bringing a bill into Parliament well before 21 November last year; we were supposed to have seen the bill in this place and the other place well before that date, but we have not seen it yet. I asked a question in December 2019 on the bill and who had been consulted on it. It turned out that the two groups that had been consulted in developing the bill were the Australian Chicken Growers’ Council and the Livestock and Rural Transport Association of WA. They were apparently consulted in April and May 2019 on a bill that the Attorney General talked about putting out for comment earlier this year. That correspondence happened almost a year before the bill even went out for public comment. I find that quite interesting. In fact, if that is the only consultation and correspondence that has been carried out, it would be very surprising and certainly would not indicate a wide scope of consultation on that legislation. It is interesting that promises keep being made, but consultation on the bill seems to be a little lacking.

One media statement purports to say that the bill essentially depends on the introduction of inspectors, which this place has already debated, and I will not go into that debate. It is almost as though it is a case of, “We’re not going to give you this bill unless you agree to some of these other things.” It is a bit of a blackmail attempt, as other members have said in this place earlier in this debate. That is not what was pledged or promised by the Attorney General in debates that have been held over the course of the last year or so. It is very disappointing that we have gone down that path.

Another aspect of this motion that I want to talk about today is the right to farm. I fully agree that we are lagging behind other states in that respect. It is interesting that New South Wales passed a Right to Farm Bill in November last year, and it is actually not a complex bill. That is legislation that could be done to good effect in this state and something that perhaps should be considered by the Parliament to enshrine some protections and ensure that our food and fibre industry can continue to do what it does without fear of interference, if you like, through neighbours and others moving into a certain area and suddenly saying, “I don’t like the smell” or “I don’t like the noise”, and essentially forcing industry out. There is also the urban encroachment issue, which is a continuous issue for agriculture, especially around the metropolitan area. We need to make sure that we protect the areas that are best placed to produce our food and that we are careful about how we develop housing and other things. I support the idea of the right to farm; it is perhaps another debate for another time in this place.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: You had eight and a half years in government!

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: The minister is again making lots of noise in the background, but I am sure she will get up to speak soon and make her case in support of this motion. It would be pretty hard not to support a motion that recognises the commitment of our farmers to our state and those who produce our food and fibre. They are never more important than in a time of crisis, when we see supermarket shelves emptying, as others have talked about, because of the perception that we are going to run out of food. We are not going to run out of food in this country because our farmers do such a good job and produce so much more than we actually need to consume. It is an industry that very often flies under the radar. Even throughout the COVID-19 debate, we did not hear a lot from the Premier about agriculture, even though it is an industry that has continued on, employs people and does a lot for our state in not only an economic sense but also, most importantly, a community sense. It is an industry that underpins many small communities out there and throughout this crisis it has continued to do what it does to support those communities, yet we have heard very little from the Premier about how valuable the industry is in that sense. It is true that industries, like mining, contribute massively on an economic scale, but I argue that the agricultural industry, as members have said, helped to build this state. We rode on the sheep’s back and we ride on the back of agriculture still. It is an industry that will continue to profit and survive into the future. Our farmers are very efficient and are very much able to adapt to new challenges. They do what they do best to keep their businesses thriving, because they do not get a lot of help. We do not subsidise our agricultural industry in this country. Certainly, when compared with nations in the European Union and others, our farmers get very little help

Hon Rick Mazza; Hon James Chown; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Acting President; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

from government. Farmers make the most of every dollar they plough into their farms and into their businesses to try to get the best out of them.

Once again, I wholeheartedly support this motion. On behalf of the Nationals WA, I indicate that we will certainly be supporting it. I congratulate Hon Rick Mazza for bringing it before us.

HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (North Metropolitan — Minister for Agriculture and Food) [2.20 pm]: I can contain myself no longer. Of course it is fantastic that we can debate a motion that recognises the importance of agriculture in this state, but it is very depressing to get the same old gladbag of 30-year-old ideas that try to set up a model of city versus country, farmers versus city folk, and flogs the same old dead horse. That is going to take agriculture absolutely nowhere. I was absolutely amazed at the suggestions that it is vegan activists who are destroying farming. I mean, we have had only two or three incidents in the last couple of years. There was no comment at all about the \$800 million export industry that has just been lost by opposition members' federal colleagues. There was not a peep! That will take at least \$200 million off farm incomes this year. Nothing is going to be taken off farm incomes by a couple of crazy guys going down to a farm and getting a photograph of themselves with a cow. That is not the real game changer. Opposition members are ignoring the real game changer.

Hon Jim Chown: I thought the Premier had a special relationship with China.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Of course we do, but has the member heard that there is a federal government?

Hon Jim Chown: What is your position? What has your government done on this matter? Zero.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: That is absolutely wrong. We have a dialogue. This is about a federal matter. This is about Scott Morrison playing the domestic card, playing to our friends here in One Nation, and the consequence is that farmers will lose a couple of hundred million dollars. But there has not been a peep from the other side to call on the federal government to look at these matters.

I am going to mention some things that really are issues for farmers in Western Australia. I agree that the farming industry is a community with an extraordinary work ethic, which is doing an amazing job to create the second biggest industry in this state after resources. We have said, as we have said for many years —

Point of Order

Hon JIM CHOWN: The minister is off the subject of the motion. The motion refers to trespass by activists, environmental green tape, supermarket purchasing power and nuisance neighbours. All those matters were addressed by previous speakers. The minister is not addressing the motion.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Adele Farina): The honourable member has been a member in this place for long enough to know that there is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: I am addressing the motion. I am saying that opposition members are absolutely incapable of properly representing this industry because they are so locked into an old paradigm and they are raising things that are not really significant issues. I want to hear where the opposition stands on the proposal by the federal Grains Research and Development Corporation to dismantle the Australian Export Grains Innovation Centre. That is absolutely critical for our industry because we are very export focused.

Hon Jim Chown, amazingly, did say some correct things in his contribution today. He talked about the professionalism of farming and the complexity of skills that are required to be a modern farmer. I completely agree with him. He talked about the difficulty our farmers face to compete in this global environment—absolutely! We need support structures. An organisation called AEGIC has been doing an extraordinary job helping us to find new markets—for example, developing a new malt barley industry in India to give us some protection so that when the geopolitics go wrong, we will still have some alternatives, and developing new oat products to market into South-East Asia. But I have not heard any member of the opposition complain about the fact that that organisation, which is half funded by the state government—an initiative started under the previous government, which we completely and utterly support—is under attack from the federal structures. A couple of crazy vegan activists are not the problem; the problem is the absolute disinterest, I think, at a federal level to really focus on the WA industry, which is overwhelmingly export oriented.

We have created a piece of legislation that will provide protection for farmers. We have been committed to doing that and we are still committed to doing that. I was completely surprised by Hon Colin de Grussa who said that he had not seen the legislation because the exposure draft was put out on 29 February. We have been doing the consultation process. I believe 185 submissions have come out in response to that and the report is being dreamt up—sorry, the report is being crafted as we speak.

Several members interjected.

Hon Rick Mazza; Hon James Chown; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Acting President; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: I was pre-empting what I was going to say about you guys! The opposition dreamt up the notion that this is blackmail.

Let me get to the essence of what we are saying. We have a series of penalties that have worked really quite well in WA. The police have been very efficient. Every case of activism has been prosecuted. Courts have taken this seriously. Very significant fines and restraining orders have been imposed. It is not as though we have had the judicial policing problems that we have seen in other states. Nevertheless, we have committed to doubling the fine so that penalties for trespass on a place of animal food production will be increased to two years in prison or a \$24 000 fine. The concept of aggravated trespass will see the penalties double on a normal trespass event. We have also included other provisions so that if the court does not impose a prison sentence, the court must impose a community order that prevents the offender from entering the farm for a period of two years, and a person who commits another offence while subject to a community order or breaches a community order may be resentenced for the original offence. I think that is a pretty strong set of provisions.

To balance that out, we have said that in respect of abattoirs and intensive production facilities, such as intensive piggeries—not the general sheep and wheat farm—designated inspectors will have the right to go into industrial-style farming and abattoirs to carry out routine inspections to ensure that animal welfare concerns are being addressed and that the provisions of animal welfare legislation are being met. The amazing thing is that that power does not already exist. Members need to understand that in dealing with this issue of animal activists trespassing onto farms and abattoirs, it has become evident that that power does not exist. It is completely implausible to say that we should not be able to go in and inspect an abattoir to see whether animal welfare concerns are being met. That would not be in the interest of farmers. It is in the interest of farmers and livestock producers that we have a credible animal welfare system. As noted by many sensible farmers, vegans eat vegetables and grains, and those vegetables and grains are grown by farmers. I am not quite sure why farmers would so hate them. There is a much better argument. The member is going on about how the threat to farming is animal activism. There is a threat to livestock producers from the move towards veganism, which is motivated partly by—research has been done on this—concerns about climate change and partly by concerns about animal welfare. That presents an existential threat to livestock producers. What should we do about it? Getting up and down and bashing a few mushy-headed vegans is not the answer. There is a much better way.

Hon Rick Mazza interjected.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: We are happy to put the penalties in and we are going to do it, but there is a much bigger picture here. I urge members to start thinking along these lines. In my view, there is an incredibly good argument that to address some of these critical climate change issues, we absolutely need to bring more livestock back into the system. It has been a bit of a tragedy that we have taken so much livestock out of our farming systems. I urge all the vegans to read the book by Gabe Brown, an American rancher, titled *Dirt to Soil*. It helps people to really understand the importance of the mixed farming model. If we want to develop soil carbon, improve water retention and address climate and availability of water issues, we have to start rebuilding our soil, and clever, smart livestock grazing is absolutely part of that.

The concerns about climate change are—I think wrongly—driving people towards veganism. Part of that comes from North America, which has a very high degree of very intensive grain-fed animals that are not doing anything to improve the land to be part of a dynamic system. The second concern is animal welfare. People who purchase meat and dairy products are concerned about animal welfare standards. Insulting them is not the way to deal with it. We need to deal with it by having a modern, responsible transparent system on animal welfare; that is what people want. Ninety per cent of people are not vegans; they want to eat dairy, eggs and meat, and they want to wear wool. Again, there is another very strong environmental argument for the benefits of wool and how it addresses sustainability over the petrochemical-based synthetic fabric substitutes. I urge members to start thinking in a slightly more complex way. How can we sell the story of farmers to modern day consumers? They want to love farmers. We can see that when we go to the Perth Royal Show. We can read the comments that city folk put on the comment boards. They overwhelmingly support the farming community and they want to do the right thing by our farmers, but there are political parties with a business model based on trying to create the opposite.

I am very pleased to see that WAFarmers, under the leadership of Rhys Turton, and Mic Fels, who recently came on as president of the WAFarmers Grains Council—both modern progressive guys—understand that the old model is not the way. We have to be at one. In this day and age, a person does not spend half their life going around insulting consumers; they get to understand them and they get to tell the story.

Hon Rick Mazza: Vegans calling farmers murderers is not insulting farmers?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: That is not where most people are at. People have concerns about animal welfare. That is not addressed by just ranting and raving; we address it by having a modern and transparent

Hon Rick Mazza; Hon James Chown; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Acting President; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

system. If the member went anywhere out into the community and asked, “Do you think it is wrong that we have the ability to inspect abattoirs to see if they are conforming with animal welfare laws?”, virtually no-one would say that that is wrong. The argument of the activists is that there is no transparency and there are no inspections. Actually, there are no inspections. We are going to provide this greater degree of protection to all animal production businesses, including farms, but a small subset that includes abattoirs—we have been talking to abattoirs—do not appear to be disturbed by the idea that people may come in to check for their compliance with the animal welfare regime. Why would they be concerned? In WA, the intensive farming industries, which includes some of the egg production and pork industries, will be subject to inspections. Nobody will be asking them to do anything more than they are supposed to do already; we are just going to be checking that they are doing it. We have inspectors who go around to restaurants; no-one says that that it is outrageous and that we should not be inspecting restaurants.

The member is taking a very wrong approach to this issue. Our proposed legislation will offer a greater degree of protection with a well-crafted set of penalties designed to keep these people off farms. The small counterpoint is that abattoirs and intensive farming industries will be inspected from time to time to ensure that they comply with animal welfare laws. The embarrassing thing would be for farming industries to say no to this after the ABC’s story about horses. The member is pretending to talk for farmers who are saying that they do not want anyone to have a look at the abattoirs to see whether they are compliant with animal welfare. It is completely and utterly indefensible—think about it! This is a modern industry. Think about the modern farmers who understand it is in their interests to present themselves as people who are concerned about animal welfare with a transparent compliance regime for agriculture. That is what this legislation will provide. We are not proposing inspections on farms as part of this legislation, but I do not for the life of me see how we could possibly justify saying, “We’re going to stop activists going out into abattoirs, but we’re not going to go and have a look at ourselves!” It is completely implausible and it is antithetical to the interests of the farming community for members to argue that because it presents them in the wrong way to their consumers. They present farmers in the wrong way to the international markets, which increasingly want to know the story, understand the provenance of and have confidence in their produce. I can tell members that movements were beginning across Europe to boycott all Australian agricultural products because of what they saw in the live export industry. This is a real concern but we have to be more sophisticated in our approach. It has to be a better and more clever approach than us versus them, because really guys, we are all in this together. The people who eat the food and the people who produce the food have to create an incredible web of mutual trust and respect.

HON COLIN TINCKNELL (South West) [2.41 pm]: I will be brief to give other members a chance to make a contribution. I thank Hon Rick Mazza for this motion. It is a very important motion considering the agricultural sector and the impediments to the right to farm. Recognising the impediments that impact farming is very important. That is exactly what Hon Rick Mazza asks for in this motion. That is the important message. We have many discussions on many different subjects in this house but when it comes to agriculture, we need to have a look at how important our food and agriculture was to us as human beings when COVID-19 came. It was the one thing that everyone needed and wanted. They needed food now; it was vital to sustain them. It is very important to recognise farmers, the farming industry and the work they have done. This is what the honourable member has done in bringing this motion to the house. This motion includes the impediments of trespass by activists, environmental green tape, supermarket purchasing power and nuisance neighbours, and the need for the protection of primary producers’ right to farm.

When I look at the agriculture industry, I wonder where we will be post-COVID-19. Are the state and federal governments going to honour what they have been talking about—the messages and signals they have been putting out there—and make it easy for us to recover, including for farming and agriculture to take the next step? We need the farming and agriculture industries to employ many people in the future and we will have to get out of their way to allow them to do business.

It was not that long ago—12 months—that I brought a motion to the house about red and green tape and part of Hon Rick Mazza’s motion covers that. There is a lot of over-regulation in certain areas including environmental protection, farming and chemical use. I do not see the need for three levels of government to have regulations on this, and farmers need to deal with all three. That is over the top and we need to look at it to make sure that we streamline the process. That takes time, but it is a major cost and a major impediment to farmers, which is exactly what Hon Rick Mazza was talking about when he brought forward this motion.

I will not go on much about the impediment of trespass by activists, other than to say that no-one is denying how important it is that all animals are treated humanely. I have not heard a member in this house say anything opposite to that. No-one is denying that the proper authorities should do their normal checks. We are talking about a bunch of people who have decided to break the law of this land. They are threatening farmers and their families, and they

Hon Rick Mazza; Hon James Chown; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Acting President; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

need to be dealt with a lot more stringently than they have been so far. We need to make sure that we send a very strong message. I will not say much more about that.

I have mentioned green and red tape before. We have lots of issues when it comes to farming and agriculture. I have talked many times about the road infrastructure and transport routes in the wheatbelt. A lot of improvement is needed in those areas. People jump through many hoops when they want to transport equipment from one farm to another or to a silo. I note the number of hoops they have to jump through and the amount of time it takes these people to go about their everyday duties.

The right to farm is very important. When people buy a property, they imagine their plans for the future and it seems at times we put so many impediments in their way that it makes it very difficult for them to do what they had planned for that plot of land. Hon Rick Mazza mentioned day farmers or the people who come in from the city. I saw it happen in Innaloo when an old person's home was built right next door to the loudest, busiest, biggest rock'n'roll hotel in Western Australia. Then they complained about the noise coming from the hotel. I was amazed there was a case because it is a bit like building a home next to a football stadium and complaining that there are a lot of people around on the weekend. Lots of things come up that farmers deal with on a regular basis. At times they do not feel like they are well supported in this house or the other place. I know that on this side of the house, many members have made very positive contributions about farmers, farming and agriculture. However, much of the minister's contribution was spent criticising people, having a go, and talking about things we have not discussed in this motion. I think she should spend more time working with all members of this house for the benefit of the agriculture industry.

Although I do not come from a farming background, my family were farmers in the United Kingdom before I emigrated here 60-odd years ago. My wife's family are farmers from the Bridgetown area. I have a real affiliation, and so do my family members, for farming and my appreciation of farmers is great. I have learnt a lot in the three years I have been in this house. At times, One Nation believes that this government and the previous government have been a bit city-centric and have not put enough time into agricultural and farming concerns or people in regional areas. This motion makes it quite clear that the member is pointing out the important things to improve agriculture in the future. How will we go post-COVID-19? Will we make it easier for farmers or will we put roadblocks in their way? For industry, whether it is mining, manufacturing or farming—no matter what it is—we need to make sure that we are committed to getting the public back to work. There is going to be a lot of suffering. It will be a tough time for this state for many years to come. We will be judged on how well our exit strategy has worked. This house and the other place need to support ministers in making it easy for Western Australia to take the next step after COVID-19.

I worry about the language that sometimes comes from the Premier. I think he has guided us reasonably well through this COVID period. Along with the Prime Minister and the national cabinet, the government has done a good job, but it now gets to the really important stage. It is easy to close down things, but it is a lot harder to open up and make that exit strategy work. The Premier will need to deal with all sides of the argument to be successful. He needs to consult with industry and with agriculture. He needs to make sure that as he makes those decisions and opens up the state, it works and the consultation is done very well. It is a bit like the recent situation with the hospitality industry; I do not think there was a lot of consultation when the government came up with a few regulations and rules. If the government had consulted with that industry a bit better, it might have been able to make it a lot more workable and we could have had a lot more people back at work in a safe environment.

Border issues were also raised and have been talked about a lot in this place. Farmers have a lot to think about. No-one wants to see the dairy industry or the egg industry suffer because of the purchasing power of supermarkets. Some pretty good policies have been discussed and brought up from other states and other parties. My own party in Queensland has put many ideas to federal ministers. These are things we really need to look at. These are hard issues. The dairy industry and the egg industry are getting to the stage of being unsustainable. What will that mean for Western Australians? It will mean that we will not get the quality dairy produce or the quality eggs that we get now. We will be getting imported stuff, either from the eastern states or overseas. We will be worse off. Where is our food security? We can look at what has happened more recently around the world.

I thank all members for their contributions. I also want to commend Hon Rick Mazza for moving this very important motion. At times, members of the crossbench believe that agriculture is not as important to the Premier or the government as it is to the people of Western Australia. That has clearly shone through during this pandemic, when the most important thing is being able to go to the supermarket to survive. The agriculture industry is the industry that makes that possible for all of us.

Hon Rick Mazza; Hon James Chown; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Acting President; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

HON ALISON XAMON (North Metropolitan) [2.52 pm]: I rise to say a few words on one of the areas of this motion, following the excellent contribution by my colleague Hon Diane Evers—that is, to talk about farm trespass. It really highlights the inadequacies of our current animal welfare laws. Cruelty to animals is of concern to the community at large. When there are exposés of animal cruelty—they are aired far too frequently, I have to say—the outrage is palpable. It is not any one particular industry or one kind of animal. People will not abide cruelty, regardless of where it is occurring.

The government has of course just commenced a review of the animal welfare legislation. Like many members, I put in a submission to that process. I note that the lack of trust that people have in the current laws was one issue that was highlighted in the documents that were printed beforehand. At this point, unfortunately, I could pretty much produce a laundry list of animal cruelty that has been uncovered by whistleblowers or activists who have engaged in trespass and unauthorised monitoring or videotaping of this abuse. Quite simply, we should not need animal activists to uncover animal abuse on this scale. It is, and it should be, the regulator's job to stop animal cruelty from occurring in the first place. Current legislation for the monitoring and enforcement of animal welfare is insufficient. If it were working, we would not see instances of hundreds of cattle dying from dehydration, or we would be able to prosecute the people who allowed these things to happen. At the moment, large-scale acts of animal cruelty are going unnoticed by the authorities. If or when they are noticed, the perpetrators very often escape any form of legal repercussion. People are justifiably outraged by what is a complete lack of legal action on animal cruelty matters, and I think that they should be.

These clear and present failures of the law and the agency that is supposed to protect animals are driving people who care about animals to behaviour that is against the law. Western Australia is lagging behind in implementing legally enforceable national standards. We are protecting the welfare of production animals used in agriculture—chickens, sheep, cattle and pigs, in the main. There is movement but it has been slow. We are well behind our counterparts in the eastern states. We have been able to legally implement many of these standards since only late last year, despite some of them having been nationally agreed years ago. We want Western Australians to have confidence in the animal welfare practices employed by WA's primary producers. We recognise that most farmers care deeply that the animals they have nurtured and raised are treated appropriately throughout the whole of their lives. However, the minority who do the wrong thing are not facing the sorts of legal sanctions we would expect them to face, whether that is because there are legal loopholes or simply because there is a lack of capacity and resourcing in those regulatory offices. It is essential that we strengthen the capacity to undertake lawful monitoring activities and put in place measures to prevent and identify contraventions of the Animal Welfare Act, wherever and whenever that occurs. Currently, activists feel they have to fill that hole by uncovering animal abuse. Clearly, we need to fix that broken system that is pitting members of our community against each other.

I particularly look forward to the delivery of proactive inspections of places where animals are housed and farmed, and ensuring that our inspectors have the powers needed to detect and deter cruelty offences and the mistreatment of animals. We need to do that in order to protect those farmers who are doing the right thing, which is by far the majority. For the life of me, I cannot see why anyone would be opposed to such important reforms.

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West) [2.57 pm]: In the very brief time available to me, I want to make a few comments about where I think the Minister for Agriculture and Food got it wrong today.

An opposition member interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Yes, just a few things!

She was particularly wrong in relation to farm trespass laws. What is this government and this minister doing wrong? They are victim blaming. That is what is going on in the agricultural sector in Western Australia. There are laws to protect people against home invaders. Inspectors do not have to prove that a person was not growing drugs in their property before they will prosecute the person who invaded their home. A person who has been attacked does not have to prove that they were not jaywalking at the time. An inspector does not have to cover them to say that they were doing the right thing and therefore those laws will be progressed. We do not ask victims of domestic violence to allow an inspector to come in to prove that, at the same time, the victim is not cheating on their taxes. This government has presented to Western Australia a combined bill that says to farmers, "We will protect you if you agree to these additional things." It is victim blaming at its worst. That is the problem with the position taken by the Minister for Agriculture and Food in this place. It is up to her to present two separate bills. If she is concerned about animal welfare in Western Australia, present this chamber, and the other chamber, with a bill. If she is concerned about farming practices, present us with a bill, but do not come into this chamber and say, "We will only protect the farming community if we get our way on our animal rights agenda." If it is not an animal rights agenda, come into this place with a separate piece of legislation and prove it. The minister said some amazing things about the need to protect farmers. She said to members on this side of the house that we present them in the wrong way to consumers. Actually, it is the government that is presenting them in the wrong way because the

Hon Rick Mazza; Hon James Chown; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Acting President; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

government is empowering the animal activists by putting forward legislation that says that farmers are doing the wrong thing and that the government will protect the farmers only if they can be inspected to make sure that they are not doing the wrong thing. This is victim blaming. When Direct Action was in full swing and running everywhere around Western Australia, its activists were charged. There are laws; it is called the Animal Welfare Act. Laws are in place and the activists were charged with trespass. What did James Warden say when he walked out? He said, "I don't really care. We'll keep going." That shows disrespect. Who is the greatest empowerer of the farm invaders? It is anyone who supports a bill that victim blames and says that they will put in place protections for the victims—if they can get away with those—only if members agree to their rights agenda at the same time. It was not members on this side of the house who spoke who were empowering working against farmers and their ideals; it was the government member who engaged in victim blaming as part of this process. Let me say this about animal welfare, the Animal Welfare Act and the inspection of abattoirs: guess what? That occurs. Do members know who works in abattoirs? It is a grumpy old group of people called veterinarians, and some of them are dodgy in some places!

Hon Stephen Dawson interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I could tell the minister some stories!

I have appeared in court as a professional witness in cases when cruelty was detected in an abattoir.

An opposition member interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: By a vet. This is not new. It has been presented to us that all these things are occurring but that there is nothing in place to prevent them, that there is no Animal Welfare Act and that no inspection processes occur in abattoirs. It is not true. This is a victim-blaming agenda and there is no doubt that farmers are denigrated by a process that says that they will be protected but only on the basis that the government gets away with its own animal rights agenda.

HON RICK MAZZA (Agricultural) [3.02 pm] — in reply: I thank all members who contributed to the debate. Hon Jim Chown gave a great history of the development of Western Australia through the agricultural industry. He also made the very valid point that agriculture is now a very specialised and technical industry. He supports the right to farm. Hon Diane Evers wants animals to be treated well, and I think most primary producers also want their animals treated well, because if their animals are not in good condition, they are not worth too much on the market. Overall, farmers practise animal husbandry to a very high standard. Hon Aaron Stonehouse spoke about the pioneers and droving throughout the north of Australia. I think McKenzie and O'Donnell may have been related to Patrick Durack, who also drove cattle across the Top End and settled in Argyle, which now, of course, is all underwater. Hon Colin de Grussa supports the motion and I thank him for his contribution. The honourable member also spoke about animal activism and his disappointment with the progress of a proposed bill that we have not seen as yet and that will include a requirement for designated inspectors. He also supported the right to farm.

I am flabbergasted by Minister MacTiernan's contribution. I am absolutely stunned. If that was supposed to be in support of the agricultural sector, she has me completely bewildered. If she spoke to farmers in the industry, she would know that there is a lot of concern about the issues that were raised today. Why has New South Wales introduced the Right to Farm Bill? These people are very concerned. They are the ones who produce the food. All the minister went on about was the people who eat it. We are talking about those who are actually producing it. If the producers stop producing, people would stop eating, and that would be very dangerous to the community! I do not know where she was going with her contribution. There was a lot of focus on inspecting abattoirs. It ran through my mind, too, that abattoirs already have a stringent and robust way to monitor animal welfare.

Hon Colin Tincknell supports the motion and spoke about some of the infrastructure requirements needed in the sector. Hon Alison Xamon was very concerned about animal welfare in farming practices. I have to say that farmers, generally, are very, very good and have a very high standard of animal husbandry and are very concerned about the welfare of their animals. Being an activist and invading people's property, which is basically home invasion, is not a way to deal with the issues. Hon Dr Steve Thomas made some very valid points about victim blaming when it comes to farmers, and I agree with him wholeheartedly. There is no point saying that we will inspect them and make sure that they are doing the right thing when they are the victims of people going onto their property and interfering with their farming practices.

I had a bit to do with the Animal Welfare Act during an inquiry we undertook. It contains quite strong laws. If someone breaches the act through the mistreatment of animals or animal cruelty, there are severe penalties. Whether that is being enforced by the judiciary is another matter. The Animal Welfare Act 2002 provides very significant penalties for anyone who breaches the requirements of that act. There is a lot of talk about strengthening

Hon Rick Mazza; Hon James Chown; Hon Diane Evers; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Acting President; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Dr Steve Thomas

the Animal Welfare Act or inspections, but we have strong laws in Western Australia to deal with those who mistreat animals.

With that, I thank members who have contributed. In time, I would like to see a right to farm bill that gives comfort to our primary producers for what they do in our community by producing our food and providing jobs for the state.

Question put and passed.