

AGRICULTURE — DOPPLER RADAR

1333. Hon NIGEL HALLETT to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

- (1) Could the minister explain why the department has yet to table a cost–benefit report into expanding WA’s radar network that was due in late September?
- (2) Given that the department outsourced the garnering of information for this report —
 - (a) has all the information been received; and
 - (b) what has been the cost of this process?
- (3) Who is in charge of this project in the Department of Agriculture and Food?
- (4) How much longer is WA expected to compete with other key interstate and international agricultural producers when the lack of technology—predominantly Doppler radar—places them at such a major disadvantage and restricts the collection of specialist data for the Bureau of Meteorology and the Department of Agriculture and Food?
- (5) Given that data from radars enables the bureau to provide more accurate data and better forecasts and warnings, what action has been taken by the Department of Agriculture and Food to lobby the federal government for priority in the bureau’s program to fund radars that not only benefit the agriculture sector, but also provide specialist advice to emergency services and the aviation and mining industries?

Hon KEN BASTON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question.

- (1) The Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia is in receipt of a final draft of a report into the availability of mobile phone and Doppler coverage prepared by the AEC Group. AEC has rationalised its Perth office, which has caused some delays in finalising the document. DAFWA intends to ensure that the final report accurately portrays the benefits and costs of both extended coverage of mobile digital reception and Doppler radar services to the agricultural sector and rural communities.
- (2)
 - (a) Relevant information has been received and DAFWA is seeking further, limited analysis of the data.
 - (b) The project cost is \$75 793, excluding GST.
- (3) The acting executive director of business support has had responsibility for the project.
- (4) As advised previously, the state government is very aware of the potential benefits of Doppler radar to agriculture, aviation, fire and emergency services and the broader community; however, I reiterate that Doppler radar and mobile phone communication are ultimately federal government responsibilities.
- (5) Discussions concerning Doppler radar have been held between senior executives of DAFWA and the Bureau of Meteorology, with the parties agreeing to work together on the subject. In addition, the state’s perspective on the importance of Doppler radar has been conveyed to senior officers involved in the preparation of the federal government’s agricultural competitiveness white paper.