

FEDERAL FARM FINANCE ASSISTANCE

893. Hon KEN TRAVERS to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

My question without notice, of which some notice has been given, is to the Minister for Agriculture and Food. I think the parliamentary secretary has answered enough questions this afternoon!

- (1) What action has the Western Australian government taken to protest the removal of \$10 million from the assistance package for WA farmers?
- (2) Does the minister believe there is potential for this money to be reinstated by the federal government?
- (3) When will wheatbelt farmers receive financial assistance through the federal farm finance package?
- (4) Are Western Australian government agencies ready to deliver the concessional loans immediately an agreement is reached with the commonwealth?

Hon KEN BASTON replied:

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

- (1) I spoke to Minister Joyce on 6 November 2013 prior to his media announcement and voiced my concerns about the decision. A formal letter was written to Minister Joyce on 13 November 2013 to articulate concerns over areas in the eastern wheatbelt, and for Minister Joyce to consider increasing the Western Australia funding allocation in 2014–15 to \$35 million, returning Western Australia back to the original total allocation of \$60 million. I also publicly stated that I am disappointed with the decision.
- (2) I have asked Minister Joyce to consider that proposal should the eastern wheatbelt have another disappointing season in 2014.
- (3) The state and federal governments are working towards establishing a scheme for all primary producers in Western Australia in the coming weeks, with applications expected to open in January 2014.
- (4) The Western Australian government will be ready, with applications expected to open in January 2014.