

Western Australian Meat Industry Authority —

Mr S.J. Price, Chair.

Mr D.T. Punch, Minister for Regional Development representing the Minister for Agriculture and Food.

Ms I. Loo, Acting Chief Executive Officer.

Mr T. Palmer, Chief of Staff, Minister for Regional Development.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: This hearing is for an off-budget authority. The estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. Questions must relate to the operations and budget of the off-budget authority. The chair will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point.

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 2 June 2023. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system.

I give the call to member for Central Wheatbelt.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Could the minister provide us with a little bit of detail around the completed works and the program going forward? It is a very consistent amount of \$450 000 across the forward estimates. What does the minister anticipate those works will look like across the forward estimates?

Mr D.T. PUNCH: In 2023–24, there will be an allocation for scanning equipment for sheep and goat electronic identification in the order of \$150 000 to \$250 000, depending on the outcome of the procurement process, and additional funding of \$100 000 to replace a feeding tractor, \$25 000 to replace dongas, an estimated \$50 000 for safety equipment, an estimated \$25 000 for a hot-water pressure washer, and any available additional funds will be used for additional CCTV coverage and front gate remote connections.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Can the minister confirm that there is CCTV out there currently?

Mr D.T. PUNCH: I will defer to the acting CEO.

Ms I. Loo: Yes.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is the security of the site adequate given the attention that I am sure facilities like this attract from animal activists? Can the minister advise whether there have there been any incursions or incidents?

Ms I. Loo: We have a plan for if animal activists come onto the site. The CCTV is meant to extend our current coverage. Right now, we have front gates that are closed on most days except for sale days and days when stock is delivered on site. I believe at the moment the security on site is adequate, but we can always enhance it, and, like the minister said, if there is sufficient funding under that \$450 000, we will expand our CCTV coverage on site.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: For clarification, was the \$450 000 for all those programs that the minister just referred to one lot of \$450 000 or is that across the forward estimates?

Mr D.T. PUNCH: It is one year's funding. The initial amount in relation to scanning equipment is dependent on the outcome of a procurement process and funding from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, so there may be an additional source of funding to contribute to that.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Further, I understand that the electronic ID system for somewhere like the Katanning Regional Sheep Saleyards will cost about \$1 million. Obviously, this allocation is nowhere near that. If, say, \$1 million is required for Muchea, will it come out of the \$22.2 million allocated for the electronic ID system?

Mr D.T. PUNCH: I think the member is referring to a line item in the Agriculture budget; this allocation is specific to equipment at this site.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: On the Muchea saleyards, given the federal government's forthcoming policy on banning live export, and the state government's lack of support for the industry as well, have we seen an increase or decrease in the numbers going through the Muchea Livestock Centre?

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Which line item is the member referring to?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the asset investment program and the use of plant and equipment when there is a need to put either more or fewer sheep through, and the running of the Muchea Livestock Centre.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: I think that is a long bow to link the federal government's decisions on exports to the asset and equipment replacement program that exists, given that I have outlined the items that will be purchased. There will be a requirement for saleyards even with the local market.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Pursuant to this line item, asset investment program, obviously we are going to see some issues with the live export trade that will have implications. As I have pointed out previously, the government is not supporting the live export sector, and, at the same time, we are seeing the sheep flock diminish, so this equipment at the Muchea Livestock Centre will not be used. Does the minister have concerns about capital investment for an electronic ID system that will not be used once this ban comes into play?

Mr D.T. PUNCH: I think the member is talking about hypotheticals. No changes have been made at this point. The federal government has given an indication of its position and it is pursuing that. The state has made its position clear. There are no implications from those decisions that I can see in relation to this line item. There will still be a meat industry in Western Australia under any changed rules that the federal government may impose.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I have a final question: is there much interaction between the Katanning saleyards and the Muchea Livestock Centre with plant and equipment and so forth in relation to this line item?

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Yes.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: When, say, the Katanning saleyards looks to upgrade its equipment, would it be overseen by WAMIA or would it be a Shire of Katanning–Katanning saleyards operation or would it be a joint arrangement with WAMIA?

[2.10 pm]

Mr D.T. PUNCH: There is no control or authority in relation to equipment purchases at the Katanning centre. There is regular discussion about best practice, ideas and shared learnings.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 255, budget paper No 2, volume 1, and to budget paper No 3, “Asset Investment Program”, specifically the line item “Jobs and Economic Development”. There is \$500 000 across the forward estimates in budget paper No 3, but it is \$450 000 across the forward estimates in budget paper No 2. Can the minister explain why there is a difference?

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Is budget paper No 3 part of this division; can I clarify that?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It relates to this industry.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: I seek clarification from the chair.

The CHAIR: That is a good question. What page is it?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It is page 292, budget paper No 3, “Asset Investment Program”. Under the heading “Jobs and Economic Development” is the line item “Western Australian Meat Industry Authority”.

The CHAIR: Sorry, minister; what was your question?

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Is budget paper No 3 part of this division?

The CHAIR: Yes, it is.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: In answer to the question, it is a rounding up of 0.45 to 0.5.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that normal practice? Why would it not be accurately reflected in the budget papers? It might be a rounding error to a government with a massive surplus, but it is still a lot of money. Is that normal practice?

Mr D.T. PUNCH: That is the advice I have received.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Okay. It will be interesting to see what other rounding errors are in the budget papers as we proceed.

The CHAIR: That complete the examination of the Western Australian Meat Industry Authority.