

PASTORAL LEASES — RENEWAL

248. Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE to the Minister for Lands:

I refer to recent comments by the Minister for Lands regarding the pastoral leases that cover 35 per cent of the state, when he said, “I acknowledge and accept that the pastoral lease renewal process has not been handled well.”

- (1) After 30 June 2015, will the Minister for Lands be reissuing leases where government advice is that the lease is not viable?
- (2) Will the minister be seeking to allow the diversification of land-use activities on pastoral leases?
- (3) What advice has the minister received on diversification of pastoral leases and the future provisions of the commonwealth Native Title Act?

Mr D.T. REDMAN replied:

- (1)–(3) A number of issues are in play at the moment from this government and I want to separate those out. The first and most critical is the rollover of pastoral leases, which comes on at the end of June 2015. The Department of Lands is chartered with the task of ensuring that happens. That is a deadline we need to meet and we have to meet. That is the first point. We are working with pastoralists, particularly with the good help and support of my parliamentary colleagues, Hon Wendy Duncan, MLA, and the member for North West Central, to ensure that the issues that pastoralists have are taken up in the rollover arrangements. They will have two choices in that rollover. That is the first point. It is fundamental that we get the rollover leases happening in 2015 in a timely way so that they can put in place mortgages and all those things that need to be part of rollover leases.

The second thing is that this government is embarking on a process of pastoral reform. It is charged with the task of seeing what it can do to facilitate third party investment into pastoral areas to allow for diversification of pastoral leases and to investigate the opportunities that sit around that. That is a very complicated process because in a lot of cases any changes to that tenure system trigger native title, quite rightly, and a range of issues come to bear as we head down this path. We are committed to changing what has been in place for 100 years to allow some of the opportunities that present in the northern part of Western Australia in particular to come to the fore and allow some of that investment interest.

The member also talked about diversification permits. We have embarked upon trying to streamline the process for getting diversification permits under the current legislative framework; that work is being done. As I understand it, it is not perfect, but it is a better process.

Three things are happening: the changeover of the leases in 2015; a much more streamlined process of getting diversification permits to allow alternative options to happen on the properties; and pastoral reform, which is a bit more complex. Papers that look at a number of tenure choices have been put out to the public and they might be choices that are put out to those pastoralists.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: What about the non-viable leases?

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I will let you ask that in a supplementary question.