

**PERTH MARKET AUTHORITY — BOARD MEMBERSHIP**

*Statement by Minister for Agriculture and Food*

**HON KEN BASTON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Agriculture and Food)** [2.30 pm]: Last week I announced that a new seven-member interim board had been appointed to the Perth Market Authority to manage its day-to-day operations. Some months ago, members of the previous board indicated their intention to resign on 31 December this year, as the asset sale program, including the Perth Market Authority, progressed. More recently, members of the old board and my office reviewed the timing of their resignations and opted for a slightly earlier departure, as the original resignation date would have required the appointment of an interim board during the holiday period. The new board, led by Brian Easton as chairman, who also chairs the Conservation Commission of Western Australia, has taken on the oversight of Western Australia's central fruit and vegetable trading hub for a one-year term until November 2016.

In addition to the daily operations, the appointment of this interim board will assist in the smooth transition of Perth Market City to new ownership. I thank the new board members for taking on this role to ensure continuity during this transitional period. I also thank the outgoing chair, David Thomas, and members of the board for their valuable contribution. Each board member brought considerable knowledge and expertise to deliver an efficient wholesale market and support for our fruit and vegetable industry. I sincerely thank them for their dedication and professionalism, which will provide a solid foundation for the future of Market City.

It is essential that the state's wholesale fruit and vegetable market continues as a sustainable operation. Market City offers a significant opportunity for private sector investment in WA's thriving fruit and vegetable industry. I believe that private sector ownership of the market will allow it to raise capital to expand its operations, such as further developing its cold storage facilities. It will also free the market to expand its supply chains, which can potentially include greater emphasis on export opportunities, particularly given that WA's clean, safe, high-quality food is already in high demand in the region. Increasing exports from WA helps not only those companies directly involved, but also grow the state economy. It is my understanding that the government will seek to lock in a minimum 20-year term for the site to remain a fruit and vegetable market. This is important, particularly with the growing interest by international buyers in local, clean, green Western Australian produce.

I have no doubt that the free trade agreement with China in particular could open up new and lucrative opportunities for Western Australian fruit and vegetable exports. I know from my recent trip to the Middle East, where I met with Emirates Flight Catering, that there is enormous interest from companies such as Emirates that want a guaranteed source of safe, fresh and clean food. I believe that private ownership of the market will help open up new export opportunities that currently are not available and that will benefit our 500 fruit and vegetable growers.