

ANIMAL ACTIVISM — AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

87. Hon JACQUI BOYDELL to the Minister for Education and Training:

I refer to recent incidents involving confrontations between animal activist groups and the agricultural community, including incidents in Harvey and Muchea, and threats of activism in Northam, which have all required police intervention to some degree.

- (1) What plans has the minister put in place to deal with any animal activist incidents that may arise at agricultural colleges in WA, including at the Muresk Institute and the Western Australian Colleges of Agriculture in Harvey, Narrogin, Morawa, Cunderdin and Denmark?
- (2) Is the minister aware of any incidents or threats made towards these facilities?
- (3) Has the minister sought advice from any other government departments regarding the threat of animal activist behaviour on these educational facilities?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question.

- (1) The Department of Education has existing policy, which is supported by legislation, to deal with intruders on public school premises. Based on this policy, all five colleges of agriculture have plans or protocols in place. Under regulation 75 of the School Education Regulations 2000, the principal is authorised to order a person to leave the school premises. When a person does not comply with this order, the principal will contact the police. Muresk Institute has the option of locking the gates into the farming enterprise and monitoring traffic coming through the main entrance. Staff have been advised to call the Northam Police Station to attend the site to ask the activists to move on. Muresk employs security guards to monitor after-hours activity. Based on police advice, the procedure to be followed by staff and students is to not engage with activist group members and to withdraw and remain indoors when possible.
- (2) There have been no incidents or threats to facilities at the five Western Australian Colleges of Agriculture. The Department of Training and Workforce Development staff at Muresk Institute were advised on 15 February 2019 that an animal activist group may be attending the site, but this did not eventuate. Local police instituted a checkpoint at the entrance road to Muresk and members of the state support unit attended the site to review security measures.
- (3) Senior officers of the Department of Education and the Western Australia Police Force are working together to ensure that local police support is available to each of the agricultural colleges in the event of an animal activist incident, if required. The Western Australia Police Force has provided advice to Muresk Institute on security measures. I want to acknowledge the prompt and appropriate response of the Western Australia Police Force in attending Muresk at short notice to manage a potentially volatile situation, and the cooperation and support of the Northam shire president. In addition, the office of the Minister for Agriculture and Food and the office of the Minister for Police have been contacted by my office to be kept up to date in relation to educational facilities.