

POULTRY DRAFT NATIONAL STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

862. Hon SIMON O'BRIEN to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I refer to the minister's media statement of 27 November—that is yesterday—titled "Proposed poultry standards fall short". Given that the statement contains no actual information, I ask the following.

- (1) What are the proposed standards for poultry that the WA government dissents from?
- (2) What is the WA government's preferred position?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for that question. It is almost a dorothy dixer.

- (1)–(2) We did not agree that the draft national standards and guidelines advance the condition from the rules that were put in place in 2003, which is almost 15 years ago. The new standards and guidelines on the provision of space and the nature of, shall we say, the quality of poultry life that is offered to the animals have fundamentally not changed since that time. We do not believe that the guidelines have kept in line with changes to community attitudes nor the scientific evidence and, in particular, a report that was commissioned by the Victorian government to see what we should be changing the standards to. Battery cages, in our view, do not provide an adequate standard when measured against the judgements of this scientific report.

We are quite clear that we believe that this is an inadequate set of guidelines. I have told the egg industry and the animal welfare groups that we will have a roundtable discussion sometime in late January next year to see whether we can work through these issues. I also use this question as an opportunity to say that we absolutely support the position of the Productivity Commission, which about 12 months ago came out with a report that stated that the new national standards and guidelines should be determined by an independent statutory body that is not made up of industry and activists, but rather made up of people who can make sound judgements on the science.