

AGRICULTURE — DOPPLER RADAR

**1169. Hon NIGEL HALLETT to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:**

- (1) On Thursday, 16 October, the Minister for Agriculture and Food informed this chamber that a report into the costs and benefits of providing additional radars in WA, or dopplerising existing radars, had been delayed by a further four weeks because of difficulty in sourcing costing information. Why has the WA Department of Agriculture and Food failed to communicate with Melbourne-based Environmental Systems and Services, the company responsible for installing 60 of the 64 radars in Australia?
- (2) Detailed information on costings and suggested optimum locations for expanding WA's radar network were obtained by my office from ESS Weathertech and formally provided to the WA Minister for Agriculture and Food and the department in October 2013. Why, 12 months later, is the Department of Agriculture and Food claiming it is unable to source this information?
- (3) Every state and territory in Australia, except Western Australia, uses a mix of weather stations and radar to provide highly accurate spatial analysis and quantitative rainfall data, and severe storm information. Why is the government not prioritising the installation of additional radars or progressively dopplerising existing radars to provide the Bureau of Meteorology, farmers, miners and emergency services with this latest technology?

With the President's indulgence, I seek leave to table the document relating to these questions.

Leave granted. [See paper 2178.]

**Hon KEN BASTON replied:**

I do not know what the document is, but this is the answer.

- (1) The Department of Agriculture and Food WA commissioned consultants AEC Group to prepare a business case on expanded coverage for Doppler radar services across the Agricultural Region. AEC has advised it experienced delays obtaining detailed costing information from the Bureau of Meteorology for accredited radar systems, but the report should be finalised in the coming weeks.
- (2) Although I have received basic costing provided by the honourable member, these are only part of the detailed information needed by the state. AEC has the responsibility for preparing an independent business case assessing the expansion of Doppler radar services for government. Issues such as ongoing maintenance, ownership, replacement, software upgrades and linkage to the BOM network of an accredited system have to be negotiated with commonwealth agencies.
- (3) The state government is very aware of the benefits of Doppler radar to agriculture, aviation and fire and emergency services, and has raised with the federal government the need to upgrade and expand our radar network. I make it clear that Doppler radars are not a state government responsibility and for any network to be comprehensive across the wheatbelt, it is likely to cost upward of \$20 million to \$30 million over the lifespan and needs a comprehensive business case.