

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS - CONSIDERATION

Committee

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Hon Ray Halligan) in the chair.

Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges - Eighth Report - Matters Referred to the Committee and Other Miscellaneous Matters

Resumed from 30 August.

Consideration of the report postponed until the next sitting, on motion by Hon Kim Chance (Leader of the House).

E.G. Green and Sons Pty Ltd - Government's Assistance Package - Statement by Minister for Agriculture and Forestry - Motion

Resumed from 30 August on the following motion moved by Hon Bruce Donaldson -

That the statement be noted.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I have made some comments on this ministerial statement. However, I have now determined that it would be useful to make a few more comments, because we have reached the stage at which we can do a retrospective and look at where Harvey Beef is now. I am not sure that is precisely what was intended by Hon Bruce Donaldson when he moved that the statement be noted, but it provides me with a good opportunity to make those comments. In my closing comments on Wednesday, 30 August I talked about the question of intervention. The serious issue that was confronting the government at the time was that the state's major beef processor - E.G. Green and Sons Pty Ltd - had effectively closed its operations, and a large kill season was coming up. I made the point at that time that it was easy to make a strong case for government intervention in the case of E.G. Green and Sons because it accounted for more than 80 per cent of the beef kill in this state and was, therefore, a player of immense significance in Western Australia. The potential problems for the beef industry in the event that the business could not regain viability were serious indeed. At the same time, just as strong a case could be made against government intervention. The abattoir industry is intensely competitive. Government intervention in a highly competitive industry such as this has the potential to distort the market. This has been an issue within the beef industry for some time. I have spoken to not only beef industry abattoirs but also small stock abattoirs over the past year. The one thing the abattoir operators have consistently asked me to do is not interfere in the operation of abattoirs by artificially assisting one or other of the participants in that industry. It was a difficult decision to make. Ultimately the government did intervene, but at a relatively low level. The level of government intervention related on the one hand to training and relocation packages, and mortgage and rent assistance for employees. That was in fact a grant to those employees, mostly through the Department of Education and Training. The second component was a loan of somewhere in the order of \$1.8 million to the administrator. That was a repayable loan and was designed to allow employees' entitlements to be paid out in full and immediately so that they could use the money to move on to other workplaces or to restructure their lives without having to wait for what might have been several months before their entitlements were paid. The \$1.8 million was repaid in full and promptly by the administrator.

Generally speaking, those two areas of relatively small intervention - which were employee-based and were not about the company itself - were probably appropriate. However, from the industry's position, the important thing was that four or five potential bidders were lining up to compete for this business. I regarded it as very important - I did all of this in concert with the administrator - that bidders were getting exactly the same information, in each case, from the government. The easiest way I could do that was to say to the bidders that there would be no government assistance if one of them took over the abattoir, and that in the event that they thought they could make a case to government for assistance, they must do so after they had won the bid; but that they must assume that the government would not help them in the lead-up to the bid. That at least allowed a level playing field and ultimately that was appreciated by each of the bidders. It is one thing to be told that you are not going to get anything; it is quite another thing when you know you are not getting something but you suspect that one of your competing bidders is getting something. I actually made that statement quite public in the end.

I now jump to the present and perhaps even the future. I am delighted to say that the present situation with Harvey Beef is very, very positive. Some really interesting things are coming out of it. I think that honourable members will be generally aware - those in the farming industry, at least, will be aware - that Scott Henderson, most lately of Skywest - in fact, the hero of the Skywest rescue - has taken over as the chief executive officer at the Harvey industry group. He is a man of undoubted business talents. The business is now trading at good

profits and it began operations on a stable and secure, albeit somewhat conservative, basis. It has honoured every one of its undertakings to me and to the government in full.

I also express my gratitude and appreciation to the administrator who took over the business in that very difficult time, Martin Jones of Ferrier Hodgson. The administrator achieved not only his primary objective of maximising returns to creditors - that is the statutory role of an administrator - but also a return of 100 cents in the dollar to the creditors. In a later announcement, he confirmed that interest would also be paid on the money that had been outstanding to creditors. He certainly did a magnificent job in that regard. He also ensured that the abattoir shutdown time was minimised, and even though it started at a fairly low level of kill rate, it reopened on the very day that Mr Jones had indicated that he hoped he could restart operations, and it operated at a very handy profit during the administration period. That is an impressive performance. Although the difficulties experienced at Harvey Beef were deeply concerning for all of us - certainly the government was concerned - it was even more concerning for those in the beef industry and particularly those who were awaiting payment for cattle delivered to the abattoir. Indeed, the issues that occurred were tragic for the Green family, to whom the Western Australian beef industry owes so much, because they have made a terrific contribution to the industry in this state.

Despite all those negatives and concerns, we can be confident that those who were charged with the responsibility of restabilising the beef industry after the loss of such a predominant processor have done their job well indeed, and should be thanked for it. I recently visited the Harvey abattoir, along with the Minister for Resources and Assisting the Minister for State Development, John Bowler. It is pleasing to see the plans that the Harvey industry group has made for the future of the Western Australian beef industry. I hope that the government can possibly be part of those plans, but again, consistent with the manner I have described. I do not believe in major investment by the state in a competitive business such as an abattoir operation, but at the same time I think there is always a place for the state to be a partner in an expansion if that expansion assists other parties, such as in common user infrastructure. I look forward to a future growing partnership with the Harvey abattoir, but I think we are all happy to see that the initial problem has come to a very satisfactory end.

Question put and passed.

Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs - Third Report - Overview of Petitions

Resumed from 1 December 2005.

Motion

Hon LOUISE PRATT: I move -

That the report be noted.

This report highlights to the Parliament the work that the committee has done on a range of petitions that have been tabled in this place. We undertook what was, in my view, quite a comprehensive process in examining the issues raised. The first issue dealt with in the report is the dual carriageway between Wanneroo and Yanchep Beach Roads. The petitioners wanted recognition of the rapid expansion, through industrial and urban development, of Perth's northern corridor, and of the increase in tourism traffic in the area. The petitioners called on the government to take immediate action to provide a safe travelling environment for all road users. The committee wrote to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and noted that the state government had allocated \$10 million to road improvements on Wanneroo Road. Main Roads undertook a review of priorities for Wanneroo Road. The review concluded that completing the dual carriageway in the outlined area from Wallawa Street to Joondalup Drive would require another \$10 million. However, the design for dual carriageway works between Wallawa Street and Joondalup Drive is well advanced. The minister advised that due to funding constraints, the dual carriageway funding is unable to be allocated prior to 2008-09. However, the minister indicated that this is a priority project, and that with consideration for further funding, advancing the timing of the work would be considered as part of the preparation for the future budget. The committee noted that it had raised the issue with the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. It noted the high cost of road building and that the state government has a 2008-09 forward estimate for this road. The committee noted that the \$10 million allocated in that budget does not include the dual carriageway, so it advocated that the government give serious consideration in future budget deliberations to extending the dual carriageway to Wanneroo and Yanchep Beach Roads.

A petition asking for a goldfields juvenile detention centre was highlighted to the committee. Petitioners raised with it the social and economic value of establishing a suitable centre in the Kalgoorlie-Boulder area for young people who have become involved in crime or drug or alcohol abuse at a very young age. The Legislative Council was asked to consider the need and value of a facility that ensures that younger youths are segregated from older inmates in a facility in which rehabilitation is the primary function. The committee noted that that a great deal of work was being done in the goldfields in the area of juvenile justice. The state government has

committed \$24 million to build two 12-bed regional juvenile remand centres at Kalgoorlie-Boulder and Geraldton. The centres will hold juvenile offenders on remand in a secure facility. Local community service providers will be asked to work with the Department of Corrective Services to offer appropriate programs to support remand prisoners and their families, as required. The government is establishing the internationally renowned intensive supervision program, which will be introduced in the Kalgoorlie-Boulder area this year. The intensive supervision program targets serious and repeat juvenile offenders who are responsible for a large percentage of juvenile crime in Western Australia. There was a bit of confusion on the part of the petitioners in respect of a distinction between the remand centre and a detention centre. Each has different eligibility criteria for access. The committee noted that, on the whole, there was a great deal of activity in addressing the issue of rehabilitation of young offenders in the goldfields in appropriate circumstances, so we resolved to finalise the petition, and we are bringing the issues raised in the petition before the house this evening.

The committee also examined issues in relation to Western Australia's public library service. It is good to see this kind of issue being raised in Parliament. The committee noted that the minister, when we wrote to her, addressed the issues raised in the petition. We noted the minister's advice that the issues raised by the principal petitioner in his submission can be raised for consideration in the next cycle of negotiations in the framework agreement with local government. The petitioners had asked for an investigation into the adequacy of the state government's funding of public library services and requested that the state government fund the public library service to allow for minimum standards. The Minister for Culture and the Arts advised that a historic agreement between the state government and local government had been completed and signed in December 2004. For the first time in over 40 years, both parties agreed to minimum objectives of base stock provision and replacement in the framework agreement for the provision of public library services in Western Australia. The target remains 1.25 books per person. The replacement projections across the term of the framework agreement are, however, consistently above the 12.5 per cent required in the agreement. The average replacement stock delivery is scheduled to be 13.87 per cent per annum. Budget bids for the period beyond the framework agreement are targeted to attaining and maintaining the standards. It is good to see that local government and members of the community want to have an active dialogue with the state government on the funding of local libraries. As members of Parliament, we all appreciate what a fantastic service this is. Today, libraries are about a lot more than books. They are community facilities for the exchange of information and for providing access to a wide range of electronic information services, whether through the Internet or digital versatile discs. Increasingly, a wider range of technology is becoming available, enabling us to exchange information. It will be really important that the kind of arrangements we have in place to negotiate future funding are able to take account of those factors.

Another issue looked at by the committee was depleted uranium munitions. Some members of the chamber will be aware that there have been suspicions in Western Australia that depleted uranium munitions have been used on federal sites in this state. We were asked to communicate to the federal government opposition to the use of depleted uranium munitions in Western Australia and to inquire into and report on the potential health impact of depleted uranium. In case members do not know, depleted uranium is a by-product of uranium enrichment, the most common chemical form of which is depleted uranium hexafluoride. Natural uranium is composed of three isotopes - uranium-238, uranium-235 and uranium-234, all of which are radioactive. The purpose of uranium enrichment is to concentrate uranium-235, the fissile isotope, in one stream. The other stream, which is low in uranium-235, is called "depleted uranium," and contains about 0.2 to 0.3 per cent uranium-235. It was quite difficult for us, as a committee, to get our head around what that actually meant. We sought to do some investigations with the Western Australian Premier, the Minister for Health and the Minister for the Environment. We sought advice from the Premier about our relationship with the commonwealth government, and we were advised that when United States naval operations are conducted on commonwealth land in Western Australia, the relevant commonwealth legislation is applicable. It was the logical view of the committee that that would be the case. The Lancelin defence training area is owned by the commonwealth, and therefore commonwealth legislation applies. The state government and the Parliament really has no jurisdiction over the use of depleted uranium in that regard. However, the federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 provides that any actions that are likely to have an impact on the environment on commonwealth land must be assessed and approved by the federal Minister for the Environment and Heritage. We were pleased that the Premier was also able to advise us that military exercises conducted in Australia are subject to this act. There is a requirement under the act that an exercise proposal be assessed before the commencement of an activity, and when an exercise is predicted to have considerable environmental impact, it is referred to the federal Department of Environment and Heritage.

The key thing we found out through our investigations, which shows that it is indeed worthwhile for national issues to be raised at the state level on occasions - it might also be nice if the federal Parliament had a mechanism for inquiring properly into petitions - is that we were advised by the Premier that both the Department of Defence and the United States Consul General in Perth have previously advised the state

government that depleted uranium materials have not been used by Australian or United States forces at the Lancelin defence area. The Minister for Health was also able to advise that the United States Navy has previously stated that it does not use depleted uranium munitions during exercises with national defence forces, and that would include exercises at Australian defence force sites in Western Australia. The minister also advised us that the health effects and uses of both uranium and depleted uranium have been and are still being extensively researched, with the results published in widely available peer-reviewed documents and publications. It is unlikely that any basic research undertaken by our committee would, as suggested by the petition, add significantly to the information currently publicly available. Given all that information, the committee resolved to finalise the petition. It was significant in allaying the fears of a great many people in Western Australia, who have been questioning whether depleted uranium has been used in this state. I think this is a contribution that can be made by parliamentary committees and the petitions process in that people can ask questions of the Parliament via the parliamentary process and we can, in turn, ask questions of the government.

We also addressed a petition relating to genetically modified free zones. We have a lot of debate in this place on GM laws. Petitioners asked for our zone to be maintained and for our GM-free markets of clean, green food to be protected under section 21 of the Gene Technology Act and as part of the Gene Technology Ministerial Council's policy for at least three years. We know that WA participates in the national regulatory schemes and the legislation that was implemented in 2001. There has been a call for national GM liability laws and the Minister for Agriculture and Food advised the committee that a statewide ban on the commercial production of GM crops was announced in 2004. The minister requested that the panel charged with the review of the commonwealth Gene Technology Act 2000 also consider the legal liability of technology providers and growers. A genetically modified crops advisory committee is to be established to provide policy advice to the minister concerning the operation of the Genetically Modified Crops Free Areas Act 2003. The US free trade agreement has been negotiated by the commonwealth in consultation with the states, and the WA government will maintain its support for the labelling of GM food.

The minister also told us that the growing of GM crops will be permitted only if the government is satisfied that they would not constitute a threat to the marketing of the state's agricultural produce and that growers who choose not to grow GM crops are not adversely affected. He said that, for these reasons, the government will continue to take a very cautious approach to the introduction of genetically modified crops. That indicates that liability in relation to the operation of the GM-free crops and the introduction of crops in the future is something that will be considered. However, while that issue of liability remains unresolved, it is important that we remain a GM-free state.

What was of interest to the committee and what it strongly expressed concern about was the preliminary report that indicated that non-GM canola was being contaminated by GM canola already in Western Australia. Although we have a GM-free state and are seeking to avoid issues of liability by remaining GM free, the feedstock from which canola in Western Australia is derived is becoming increasingly contaminated. I am not surprised to find that this is the case. When the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs undertook investigations on this issue in the previous Parliament, we had the privilege of visiting Canada and looking at both wheat and canola growing. Specific regions have been put aside to grow the feedstock for the rest of Canada. It was clear that non-GM crops can be rapidly contaminated by GM crops and that their non-GM feedstock still had a significant level of GM quantity in it.

Hon Murray Criddle: Are you saying there is GM canola in Western Australia?

Hon LOUISE PRATT: The preliminary results indicate that there are low levels of GM already in some of our crops. I contend that we will need to be really disciplined to maintain GM and non-GM areas. The legislation enables us to have a framework that will allow us to declare one area to be GM and another area to be non-GM and to have appropriate buffer zones. However, the research in Canada indicated that it is extremely difficult for some areas to maintain GM-free status without enormous buffer zones. What does that do to landholders in the middle, for example? It is almost an impossible proposition. I very much support the ongoing GM-free status of Western Australia.

We have had some debate about mental health already in the house today. The committee considered a petition on the mental health consumer advocacy program. Members might recall some time ago the controversy about the changes to mental health consumer advocacy groups and claims that there were not adequate mental health consumer advocacy programs. The house received a very strongly worded petition, supported by the Health Consumers' Council of Western Australia, noting the importance of consumer representatives on committees, boards and advisory groups in having meaningful influence on the way services operate and policy decisions are made. The petition stated that consumer representation provides a tremendous avenue to assist mental health consumers to return to participation in community life by validating their experience and knowledge about mental health services. It also, incidentally, provides an area of activity that is not rehabilitation focused, but contributes to recovery and wellbeing. The committee took evidence from Dr Peter Wynn Owen, Acting

Director of the Office of Mental Health. His advice to the committee was that governments sometimes have to make extremely difficult decisions about funding. Dr Wynn Owen addressed petitioners concerns about the de-funding of the mental health consumers advocacy program and stated that one of vulnerabilities is the way that the Health Consumers' Council lost its funding to the provision of mental health consumer support. There was a bad fallout between the Health Consumers' Council, those running the mental health programs and the Department of Health. That was a very serious state of affairs.

Hon Helen Morton: When was that?

Hon LOUISE PRATT: We received evidence in 2005. However, the petition arose out of a decision that was made in 2003. The Health Consumers' Council ran the mental health consumers advocacy program from 1996 until September 2003 when the funding was stopped, as members will recall.

Hon Murray Criddle: What was your recommendation? To start the funding again?

Hon LOUISE PRATT: We were able to establish that there was a considerable breakdown, but a lot of work is being done to re-establish mental health advocacy within the health system. Dr Wynn Owen outlined a draft proposal for a consumer participation policy that was about to be signed, and he stated that an agreed framework for consumer participation should be achieved that would help us move towards what is required of us by the national mental health strategy. He said that that would help us achieve things that have been achieved in the eastern states, such as a paid consumer consultant in health services. The issues I have outlined are now being looked at. The report notes that Dr Wynn Owen also commented on these plans as follows -

A separate non-government organisation would be set up to provide individual consumer advocacy as well as the provision of consumer participation within health services. Our proposal refers to the separation of those two aspects. It is very difficult for a person working as a consumer in the health service structure to provide individual advocacy.

It is important to create a program with people providing advocacy for consumers, and consumers providing advocacy within the system.

The committee sought feedback from the principal petitioner on the evidence that it received on the proposals that were being put in place. The committee received a reply that read -

As you note, there has been progress in the planning of a framework or system for mental health consumer participation though [sic] the Office of Mental Health. There has also been sustained funding of participation of mental health consumers through participation payments administered through the Office of Mental Health. Given these developments, we would anticipate seeing progress on the implementation of the proposed plan in the near to medium term.

The principal petitioner also said -

While we regret the amount of time that mental health consumers have been without a supportive infrastructure for their representative activities, we would hope that this will be addressed through the proposals outlined by Dr Wynn Owen. Consequently, we would see a claim for the re-instatement of the MHCAP as not necessarily helpful to the planning and implementation of the process that is underway.

To a large extent the initial claims of the petitioners were usurped by the measures that were put in place to remedy the problem.

The committee concluded in its report that it was satisfied that the state government had plans in place for the introduction of an agreed framework for mental health consumer participation. It finalised that petition in October last year.

I suggest that as it is almost 12 months since that report, now is a good time to see how these plans have progressed and ensure that the deficit left by the lack of funding in 2003 has been properly addressed by this new program and that there has been adequate capacity for consumer advocacy within the mental health system.

Hon Helen Morton: Is there a mechanism to do that within the committee?

Hon LOUISE PRATT: I will raise that with my colleagues. I note that because the committee has finalised the petition, this issue is no longer before it. It will need to resolve to inquire into that. The committee will need to come back to the house and report that the committee is seeking to make a resolution to investigate that matter. It is something we can take up with the Health Consumers' Council and deliberate upon in another petition in the future. A wide variety of other petitions are currently before the committee for its active consideration. I hope members can see from the issues that I have highlighted that it is worthwhile for members of the community to raise their issues and bring them before Parliament via a petition.

Question put and passed.

Water Services Licensing Transfer Order (Carnarvon) 2005 - Statement by Minister for Fisheries

Resumed from 11 October 2005.

Motion

Hon KEN BASTON: I move -

That the statement and associated tabled paper be noted.

I believe that this water servicing licensing transfer order will transfer the assets to the cooperative in Carnarvon. The assets include pipes, fittings, T valves, supply points and meters that are necessary to deliver water to growers and plantation owners. I support this scheme because it is revolutionary. The growers are taking over the control of their water.

The horticulture industry in Carnarvon experiences water problems when the Gascoyne River does not flow. This issue has probably been a nightmare for governments of all political persuasions over the years. I remember when Hon Ian Laurance was the member for Gascoyne. The growers were a vocal lot, and probably still are but they are not as bad as they were.

Hon Kim Chance: I think they have improved a bit.

Hon KEN BASTON: The Leader of the House is right. Hon Ian Laurance decided to hold a prayer meeting. It was announced over the radio and, lo and behold, people from far and wide gathered at the local church. If anyone is a strong believer in events like this - it rained. Not only did it rain, it flooded. The local community held him responsible for the flood. His job was not an easy task.

Transferring these assets to a water cooperative which is run by the growers who will control the water and reserves is a step in the right direction.

Hon Kim Chance: There are people who would say, "If my friend Ian Laurance held a prayer meeting, the church would probably be struck by lightning."

Hon KEN BASTON: I have not heard that one.

The direction that industry has taken by taking ownership of the water has resulted in an improved delivery system and there is greater production for the usage of water. The old allocation was 72 000 kilolitres of water and now growers are producing twice as much with half that amount of water.

Hon Bruce Donaldson interjected.

Hon KEN BASTON: They certainly did. They went to Israel and studied the trickle irrigation system and they were one of the first on the river to introduce that system. They were very big grapefruit growers.

Recently I was in Kununurra inspecting the sandalwood trials at the Department of Agriculture and Food. They are the longest sandalwood trials of their kind in Western Australia's history. From memory, the oldest tree is 16 years. I was interested to see the trials and investigate the failures of those trials. They failed because it involved a flood irrigation system. I also made the effort to look at the sandalwood that has been planted in Carnarvon that is watered by a reticulation system. A reticulation system will actually deliver the nutrients to the individual plant. It was obvious that the flood irrigation system in Kununurra washed away the nutrients. The department is unable to get to the plants or service them for three weeks because their vehicles become bogged in the flood irrigated soil. After looking at the two it became obvious to me how advanced they are in this field. Maybe it was because the horticulture industry in Carnarvon had to move down the line of conserving water, while Kununurra has oodles of water.

A shortage of water actually brings about a better industry in the end. The Minister for Agriculture and Food is probably well aware of the necessity to complete the rest of the pipe delivery system in the Carnarvon horticulture industry. This system will require \$12 million. The proposal is that \$4 million will be met by the state, \$4 million by the federal government and \$4 million by the grower cooperative. This funding will advance the industry further, because it will deliver the water, with ample pressure, to the growers' properties. It will no longer be necessary to store the water in tanks and pump it, which involves double handling. That will be a huge improvement. I guess the Minister for Agriculture and Food will be able to tell me how far advanced that is and where we are at with it.

Other than that, I believe that the horticultural industry in Carnarvon is now quite exciting, because there is certainly a different thinking about the way in which the people have their water delivered, the amount of water they can use, what they can use it for, and also the trading in water rights, which means that there is not someone sitting on water that is not being utilised for productivity. All in all, this licensing order is a step in the right

direction in handing over control of water. The growers are now accepting the control of their industry, the outcomes, the supply of water and the reserves for drought-proofing the industry for the future.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: I will quickly give some credit where credit is due. When this scheme of arrangement was being put in place, a number of growers in Carnarvon were very unhappy. In fact, a couple of them, whose names I will not mention but whom members may know, have the capacity to cause a lot of grief for people if they decide to take them on over an issue. They made it very clear to me that they did not like what was being done with this matter, and they asked me what I would do about a regulation that was required to achieve the outcomes that we are discussing tonight. I duly did, as a good local member would do, put a notice of motion on the notice paper to disallow the regulation. I might add that two or three other members did the same thing the same day, I think, so obviously the same person had contacted not only me, but also other members.

I pay credit to the then Minister for the Environment, Judy Edwards, and her principal private secretary, whose name escapes me; it will come to me shortly. That person used to work for Hendy Cowan. The PPS to the minister was kind enough to take my phone call and indicate that the minister was prepared to delay the implementation of this scheme until such time as further consultation had taken place. My understanding is that that consultation took place. There was then no need to proceed with the disallowance of the regulation, which I think was subsequently withdrawn. As Hon Ken Baston has indicated, the scheme has now progressed and appears to be working well. I just wanted to take a moment to thank the then Minister for the Environment for her consideration of that request at the time, and particularly her PPS, who was very helpful in ensuring a good outcome for everyone.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I want to add very briefly to that, and to pick up on the comments of Hon Ken Baston. I recognise that Carnarvon has been a real leader in the adoption of new technology, partly because the people there pay the highest price for irrigation water in Western Australia, other than that paid by those few irrigators off scheme at Geraldton. However, I believe that it brings out the best in this unique agricultural area. I was enormously impressed a little while ago when I heard what the net financial return per hectare was from river land. It is quite an astounding figure. I doubt that any irrigation area in Australia gets remotely close to the number of dollars that can be earned off a given area. That has not come by accident. That has come from a difficult-to-manage water resource as a result of very careful planning. Given the interesting background of the Gascoyne irrigation area at Carnarvon and the vigorous debates that can arise over almost anything - I can quite understand how the Leader of the Opposition could have been caught up in the vigour of this debate, as we often have been -

Hon Norman Moore: You are momentarily intimidated.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Yes. It is a vigorous debate. This diverse community contains among this small number of growers in the valley at least a single representative of every nationality on the face of the earth. It is a very diverse area. However, these people have been able to pull together in their own unique way. This is important because those involved in the development of other irrigation areas in the Gascoyne region can take a lot of heart from what has happened on the Gascoyne River. From that we can build what is potentially a very serious industry indeed. We know that an excellent market window is provided by that latitude. As people move a little inland into higher temperature areas, they will face even greater challenges. However, what has been shown to be possible at Carnarvon gives us great heart for the development of that area as a much more important agricultural area than it now is.

Question put and passed.

Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations - Second Report - Annual Report 2005

Resumed from 1 December 2005.

Consideration of report lapsed.

Premier's Reading School of the Year - Statement by Minister for Education and Training

Resumed from 20 October 2005.

Motion

Hon PETER COLLIER: I move -

That the statement be noted.

I have a few comments to make on this statement. Basically, it is a good-news statement, because we are dealing with reading, and the promotion of reading, in primary schools, and no-one could possibly, in any shape or form, deny the benefits of reading in primary schools. That is why I endorse the comments of the minister in this statement. However, I am not quite sure about the criteria for the Premier's Reading School of the Year. Perhaps the minister will give us an explanation of the criteria.

Extract from *Hansard*

[COUNCIL - Wednesday, 13 September 2006]

p5817a-5823a

Hon Kim Chance; Hon Louise Pratt; Hon Ken Baston; Hon Norman Moore; Hon Peter Collier

Progress reported and leave granted to sit again, pursuant to sessional orders.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm