

PASTORAL LEASES — VIABILITY REPORT

8023. Mr C.J. Tallentire to the Minister for Agriculture and Food

- (1) Did the Minister, or any of his departments, commission any report(s) in 2010 or 2011 assessing the viability of a number of pastoral leases in the southern and northern areas of Western Australia and, if so, what was the cost of drafting the report(s)?
- (2) Have the report(s) been finalised and released publicly and, if not, when will they be finalised and released publicly?
- (3) What are the main findings of any such report(s)?

Mr D.T. REDMAN replied:

- (1) Between October 2010 and July 2011, Department of Agriculture and Food officers prepared reports on the viability of the northern and southern pastoral regions based on biophysical assessment of the individual pastoral leases in the respective regions. A third report was prepared by the Department on the financial viability of southern rangelands pastoral businesses and a supplementary rangelands “financial health” assessment was prepared by a consultant. Preparation of the reports commenced in anticipation of the Rangelands Reform Program, which was subsequently announced by the Government in December 2010. The cost of the financial health assessment conducted by the consultant was \$19 000.
- (2) The reports are part of a body of work which is continuing under the auspices of the Rangelands Reform Program. As part of Rangelands Reform, the Department has engaged consultants to assist in identifying opportunities and constraints associated with sustainable economic development of the rangelands including through consideration of these reports, earlier assessments, and the outcomes of consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. The consultants are due to provide a final report in July 2012. It is anticipated that this report will be presented at a stakeholder forum to be held in the second half of this year.
- (3) The reports cover biophysical and economic conditions associated with pastoral based activities conducted over 37 per cent of the Western Australian landmass. Report findings therefore reflect considerable diversity in environmental conditions, the scale and structure of businesses and viability outcomes. Large parts of the rangelands face major sustainability challenges but pastoralism remains viable where businesses have sufficient biophysical and managerial capacity. Analysis of the financial health of businesses also highlights the value of a diversified income base to overall business sustainability.