AGRICULTURE — DOPPLER RADAR

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

(1) Given that the government is committed to increasing the availability of new technology to Western Australian agriculture with $10 million in royalties for regions funds, what steps is the government taking to develop a Doppler radar network—available in all other Australian states and territories—in Western Australia?

(2) How confident is the government that, as a matter of urgency, two Doppler radars, part of a suggested six-Doppler radar network, will be installed in Western Australia's wheatbelt to enable grain farmers to access high resolution weather, soil and crop data for the start of 2015?

(3) How certain is the government that a further four Doppler radars will be installed, and existing radars upgraded to Doppler capability, to provide wide-ranging radar coverage to assist with the provision of high-resolution data for fire and emergency services, and aviation and mining purposes?

Hon KEN BASTON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question

(1) The Department of Agriculture and Food has engaged a consultant to develop a business case for the installation of two Doppler radars in the wheatbelt. I discussed the importance of Doppler radars in agricultural production with federal minister Joyce on 1 April 2014, which was yesterday.

(2) This will be determined by the outcome of the business case and the availability of funding from the royalties for regions program and the federal government.

(3) The current objective is to install two Doppler radars in the wheatbelt and integrate them with the Department of Agriculture and Food's network of automated weather stations and the Bureau of Meteorology radar network. A funded implementation program will need to be in place for the initial Doppler radars before consideration can be given to additional radars.