

GOLDFIELDS HIGHWAY — STRAY CATTLE

Statement

HON HELEN BULLOCK (Mining and Pastoral) [5.20 pm]: Thank you, Mr President, for the opportunity to speak. Members will recall that last week I asked a series of questions about stray cattle on the Goldfields Highway. Late last year, while travelling on the Goldfields Highway between Menzies and Leonora on the way to Wiluna, I came across a group of four or five cattle wandering leisurely alongside Goldfields Highway. The cattle were in good condition, and I was a bit surprised to see them there. I commented to my electorate officer on how dangerous it is for motorists, who travel up to 110 kilometres an hour, to come across livestock wandering along the side of the highway. She pointed out to me that I should not be surprised to see cattle along the road as there was a big yellow sign warning motorists. On the way back from Wiluna, I saw another group of four or five cattle. I am not sure if it was the same group, but there they were minding their own business, until I stopped and tried to get close to them to take a picture! Obviously, they are not used to a Chinese person chasing after them with a strange object in hand, so they ran away as quickly as possible! The issue of stray cattle on the highway was raised with me during that trip by the Leonora and Menzies shire councils. The same issue was also brought to the attention of the member for Kalgoorlie, Mr John Bowler. As a result of the member for Kalgoorlie's intervention, a few big signs have been erected along Goldfields Highway between the towns of Menzies and Leonora.

From the response I received to my letter and questions, this is the current situation: \$105 000 was allocated in the 2010–11 budget as the government's contribution to fence that section of highway. Main Roads Western Australia's policy is to enter into an arrangement with pastoralists to contribute to the cost of the initial construction of fencing. The basic cost-sharing arrangement is 50–50. In this case, Main Roads is waiting for the pastoralist to make a contribution before the fencing project can commence. To address this delay from the pastoralists, the government is in the process of establishing a working group to look at the appropriateness of Main Roads' current policy, including contribution and maintenance arrangements. According to the Minister for Transport, the working group will be established in May this year. Meanwhile, on that side of the Goldfields, life goes on for both the motorists and livestock.

On 2 March this year, as everyone predicted, an accident happened: two stray cows walked out right in front of a car that was travelling at high speed. In this case, there was damage to the car, but luckily no-one was killed. There is no legal requirement for a pastoralist to make a contribution towards the cost of fencing. Main Roads has limited funding for the project. Recently, Main Roads made a submission to the Department of Regional Development and Lands seeking funding from the royalties for regions program. That is the current situation. Anything can happen while we are waiting for this working group to be established and for the pastoralist to make a contribution for his share of the cost. It is really frustrating, I must say, to know that all we can do is wait—and perhaps pray that a fatal accident does not happen while we are waiting.