

FARM FINANCE CONCESSIONAL LOAN SCHEME

455. Hon DARREN WEST to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I have here a copy of the question for the minister.

I refer to the meeting of agriculture ministers held on Friday, 2 May—a meeting that the minister did not attend.

- (1) Has the minister spoken with the federal minister, Barnaby Joyce, since that meeting about leftover funds connected to the farm finance concessional loan scheme?
- (2) If yes, did the minister get agreement that the funds, already severely reduced from the original allocation, could remain in Western Australia for future rounds?
- (3) If no to (1), why not, and when will the minister speak with Minister Joyce about the farm finance concessional loan scheme?

Hon KEN BASTON replied:

I thank the honourable member for no notice of the question.

Hon Ken Travers: You want more of them; is that what you're saying?

Hon KEN BASTON: I do not mind.

- (1)–(3) No, I did not attend that meeting on 2 May, but that meeting was not a Standing Committee on Primary Industries meeting, because SCoPI has actually been done away with under the Council of Australian Governments agreement following the change of government. So, that meeting was about what form we will take in bringing the states and those ministers together. It was a meeting that was going to last for only two hours. I had another commitment, so I sent one of my staff members, and my director general was over there as well. That drought issue was not on the agenda and was not discussed amongst any of the ministers from any of the states. However, I have been in discussion with the federal minister, and I am seeking the rollover of the funds that are not spent. For the member's information, there were some 43 applications on that first tranche—the member may not be aware of that as the time for applications closed on only 30 April. We need to see how much was left over. But I will certainly be doing everything in my power to roll what is left over into the next \$25 million, which will be available in July. That is the second tranche.