

GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS REGIME

808. Hon NIGEL HALLETT to the Minister for Agriculture and Forestry:

- (1) Does the minister realise that the strict liability regime covering genetically modified crops could effectively block from Western Australia not only genetically modified material, but potentially all non-GM seed material from important suppliers such as Canada?
- (2) If yes, has the minister's department conducted any research into the economic impact of such a move on Western Australia?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1) The current moratorium on the growing of GM crops in Western Australia would make the importation of GM seed from Canada or elsewhere a pointless exercise. Provided any conventional seed imported into Western Australia was free of any GM seed, the question of liability would not arise. If, however, the suppliers are unable to guarantee GM freedom, there could be a reduction in the availability of new breeding material into plant breeding programs and seed companies servicing Western Australia. This could impact on the variety options and productivity of the state's canola industry. On the other hand, this scenario could provide new opportunities for Australian farmers to produce non-GM seed on contract for overseas suppliers.
- (2) The Department of Agriculture is currently working with interstate agencies to assess the issues and policy and regulatory implications of recent detections of GM canola in non-GM canola crops and research trials. I will also ask the GM consultative committee or reference group - if that is the direction chosen by government - currently being formed, to provide advice to me on this matter.