

AGRICULTURE — WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY BILL

712. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Industrial Relations:

I refer to the minister's recently announced consultation sessions for the development of a modernised work health and safety bill as well as associated regulations.

- (1) Will the proposed legislation and general regulations cover primary industries, including agriculture, fishing and forestry?
- (2) If yes to (1), why has the minister omitted opportunities for consultation in the wheatbelt and upper great southern, an area covering much of the state's agricultural region?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member very much for the question. It is a very interesting question. The agricultural industry will certainly be covered by the regulations and by the legislation. It is 10 times more likely that a person in the agricultural industry will be killed at work than somebody in the mining industry. It is time that the agricultural industry stepped up and started realising that we cannot allow this to continue.

One of the challenges is that in the agricultural sector it is considered acceptable to have children play on farm equipment. This is a great challenge. We do not allow children to play on mining equipment, but for some reason we see it as acceptable to have children play on dangerous farm equipment. This is about the culture of the agricultural industry. I am pleased to say that in cooperation with Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd and CSBP the government is launching a farm safety campaign. We will be doing it at the Dowerin Field Day and it will continue —

Ms M.J. Davies: You missed that one.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Sorry, I am naming the wrong field day, but it will kick-off at a field day in the wheatbelt very soon that I will be attending. I am getting a pair from Parliament, as I understand, to attend.

Mr P.C. Tinley: You are now.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, I am now.

The current situation cannot continue. I am pleased to say that the agricultural organisations, the Pastoralists and Graziers Association and the Western Australian Farmers Federation, are supporting the government's effort to move to a higher level of commitment to farm safety. It is unacceptable to me, and I imagine to everybody else in this chamber, that we have allowed these dangerous practices to continue for such a long period. I am pleased that CBH and CSBP are supporting this campaign with cash contributions towards the publicity effort that we are doing to make sure that the agricultural sector is fully aware of the challenges in this space.

I will finish this answer by highlighting that the Premier's strong leadership has delivered 21 additional inspectors to WorkSafe and a \$500 000 budget—this is very important and people may have missed this—to support a work safety campaign across all parts of Western Australia. Noting as well that the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety's engagement on the regulations includes many opportunities for electronic input, I have no doubt that the department's campaign of engagement on the regulations, which is only just commencing, will be very comprehensive.