

LIVE EXPORT — INVESTIGATION

256. Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

Can the minister provide any update on resolving the animal welfare issues challenging Western Australia's live export industry?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member —

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Minister, I am just going to say this before you start because I have seen a bit of a pattern of behaviour before: I would encourage you to perhaps provide a concise response to this, rather than a lengthy response that could be construed as a ministerial statement that, if that is what you wanted to do, could have been done at an earlier stage of the day.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: I thank you very much, Madam President, but as you know this is a controversial issue and it is not one that members opposite have been happy with me addressing under the rubric of a ministerial statement.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Because of that and because I know members on both sides of the house are deeply concerned about this, I am very pleased that the member has seen fit to ask me a question. Yesterday, as I said, the —

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! You may not like what the minister has to say, but it is question time and she has the right to reply to the question that has been put to her. I am going to ask that you sit and listen to it quietly without interrupting her and interjecting. The Minister for Agriculture and Food has the call.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Thank you.

I just needed to update the house because yesterday I advised that we were supporting the decision by the federal minister to have a short, sharp review of the welfare requirements for animals going from Perth into that high Middle East summer. I have today written to the minister expressing a couple of concerns that have arisen from decisions. One is that it has been reported that the minister has ruled out a summer pause being taken over the July and August months to deal with that. I believe that that is actually pre-empting the recommendations of the inquiry and undermining people's confidence in that inquiry. I note that even the National Farmers' Federation has today come out and said that it believes that a summer pause might be necessary.

Secondly, we have also expressed to the federal minister our concern with the choice of the veterinarian who has been chosen to conduct that review. Although not at all reflecting on the competence or integrity of that person, the fact that for the last 20 years he has been employed by the livestock exporters is not something that lends itself to developing a consensus across stakeholders that this is an appropriate person. We are supporting the call for the appointment of Dr Mark Schipp, who is the federal government's Chief Veterinary Officer—a very senior person—and who is also the current vice-president of the World Organisation for Animal Health. It is very important that this inquiry has credibility and legitimacy across the community.