

MILK VENDORS, REPAYMENT OF COMPENSATION MONEY

700. Hon BARRY HOUSE to the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:

I am sure the minister will be aware of correspondence to all members of Parliament from some former milk vendors aggrieved by recent government decisions about compensation. I will provide the minister with a copy of one such letter. How does the minister justify the revaluation of previous legislative compensation amounts to businesses so that, in several instances - I understand there are about seven - former milk vendors who are now aged pensioners will be required to pay back many thousands of dollars to the Government?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

I thank Hon Barry House for the question. He referred to a letter that has now been handed to me, dated 28 August 2004 and signed by Mrs Robin Hinricks. I have not actually seen this letter before.

Hon Barry House: I thought it had been widely distributed to members.

Hon KIM CHANCE: It might have been, but I have not seen it. Noting the date of 28 August, I believe the issue raised by Mrs Hinricks has since been resolved in that Mrs Hinricks has now come to an understanding about the way the calculation was determined. In any case, the question was predicated on a requirement to repay money and there is no proposition, nor has there ever been, for any former milk vendor who received compensation through the process of which the House is well aware, to repay money. That may have arisen honestly and sincerely in Mrs Hinricks' mind, but it was never a government proposition. I believe that since 28 August Mrs Hinricks has come to understand that her calculation was incorrect, and that she is now satisfied, if not spectacularly happy, with the final offer that was made by the Government. I certainly hope this is so, and if the honourable member does not mind, I will take the letter and make sure that Mrs Hinricks is now satisfied.