

DRY SEASON ASSISTANCE

**599. Hon MARGARET ROWE to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:**

I am mindful of the minister's impediment today, so I will endeavour to project my voice. I refer to the minister's announcement yesterday concerning government assistance to farmers affected by drought conditions.

- (1) What is the minister's current estimate of the number of farms affected by drought in declared areas?
- (2) Is the minister aware that after deducting funds for the additional water grants, if required, and additional social and financial counselling as per the press release, the government's headline of a \$5.3 million package is reduced to only \$3 million?
- (3) If so, why did the minister not state clearly in his press release that the government at this stage has agreed to provide only \$3 million for farming assistance rather than the potential \$5.3 million figure?

**Hon KIM CHANCE replied:**

I thank Hon Margaret Rowe for providing some notice of the question.

- (1) Between 1 000 and 1 200 farm businesses are within the eligible shires. Most of these are affected, but to a greater or lesser degree, depending on their location and circumstances.
- (2) No. When part (2) of the question is read with part (3) of the question, it can be seen that the mathematics are correct but the logic is flawed.
- (3) The government's press release announced a package of up to \$5.3 million to help the farm businesses worst affected by the dry seasons in the Shires of Northampton, Chapman Valley, Mullewa, Greenough, Irwin, Carnamah, Mingenew, Morawa, Three Springs, Coorow, Perenjori and Dalwallinu. Apart from the \$200 000 that was provided for community grants, the \$300 000 extra assistance for rural, financial and social counselling and the \$200 000 for administration costs, all the support measures are directed at individual farm businesses. I expect that the assistance package provided by the government will be fully expended. The \$5.3 million figure was used in the announcement because that is the sum that was approved in the cabinet decision relating to the assistance package.