

STOCK SALEYARDS, STRATEGY IN WA

532. Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the Minister for Agriculture and Forestry:

I hope the minister has notice of my question today.

- (1) Has the government a planned strategy for the saleyards in Western Australia?
- (2) What sites does the minister support?
- (3) Will the minister table any documents outlining these plans?
- (4) Will the minister financially support the Katanning saleyards redevelopment?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

I am afraid I do not have notice of that question; however, I will deal with it as best I can.

- (1)-(4) Yes, the government does have a strategy, although it is not in a form that I could table in Parliament. It is really a strategy that has been enumerated over a period of time and a number of statements. I will try to pull that strategy together. The immediate interest of the government is in the establishment of the Muchea livestock services facility. I am happy to report, as I have done quite recently, that that is on track. I have advised the project manager, Mr David McFerran, and the chair of the Meat Industry Authority that there is interest in Parliament in a briefing on that matter, and the MIA is preparing that briefing.

With respect to the broader strategy, clearly the Midland saleyards will go when Muchea is up and running. We expect that to be at the end of 2006. I have been in discussions with the Shire of Katanning about sheep-only saleyards. I have been to the site, seen the shire's plans and discussed with the shire the possibility of state assistance for that facility, although I have made no commitment because there is a stage in the process relating to the assets of the Midland saleyards which has not yet been achieved and which I want to achieve. I have started the next phase in that process, but have handed it over to the South West Development Commission to progress after preliminary discussions with south west shires. This is the move towards a single cattle facility for the south west. I think this is inevitable, although it may not happen for another decade. We need to resolve the planning issues early and reach some level of agreement between local government authorities to avoid repetition of the useful but sometimes pointless debate we had about a replacement for Midland. As I said, I have handed that issue over to the South West Development Commission to coordinate. The structure, as I see it, is for sheep and cattle at Muchea, sheep only at Katanning, a single cattle-only facility in the south west - my initial site of preference is Kemerton, although I could be persuaded differently - and, of course, a continuation of a great southern cattle facility at Mount Barker. There is obviously a need for other saleyard facilities - Esperance is one that springs to mind quickly - but the government's outlook for core infrastructure facilities is based around those four. Whether we will be able to talk further and in more detail with the Shire of Katanning about possible government assistance for the Katanning saleyards remains to be seen. I will have more confidence about that as the construction of the Muchea saleyards progresses.