

MERGER OF CO-OPERATIVE BULK HANDLING LTD AND THE GRAIN POOL OF WA, LEGISLATION

**1535. Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:**

I am interested in the legislation that is required for the merger of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd and the Grain Pool of WA. Has that legislation been progressed to a stage that it can pass through Parliament in the required time frame?

**Hon KIM CHANCE replied:**

I thank Hon Murray Criddle for the question. For the information of members - Hon Murray Criddle would be well aware of this - two pieces of legislation are involved. The first and most complex of those pieces of legislation is an amendment Bill to the Grain Marketing Act, which governs the operations of the Grain Pool of WA. The second and much simpler piece of legislation is an amendment Bill to the Bulk Handling Act, which governs the operations of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. Both those bodies' parent legislation needs to be substantially amended for a merger to occur. The amendments to the Grain Marketing Act are sweeping and will change the Grain Pool in ways that are broadly similar to the ways in which the Australian Wheat Board Pty Ltd has been altered. Indeed, the proposed structure - except for the corporate side - is similar to that of the Australian Wheat Board. The legislation has a tight time line. The date to which Hon Murray Criddle referred is the end of the financial year for both those bodies, which is the end of October. That date is normal for grain trading industries as it correlates with their season. For the good governance of those two bodies and to allow sufficient time for the merger to be effective, it will be necessary for the Parliament to progress both those pieces of legislation well before 31 October. The honourable member's question was about whether the legislation will be ready in time for industry to put that merger in place. At this stage, I believe we are on track, although I would have liked to be a couple of weeks further advanced. Progress through the processes of government - which the honourable member understands - is proceeding well.

Complex issues still need to be resolved. Those issues are not so much to do with drafting, but relate to the Grain Pool of WA - the Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd side of it is quite simple - and have delayed us a week or two. I hoped to have at least the Grain Pool legislation through Cabinet and introduced to Parliament this week, but that will not happen because we have not finalised those issues. However, it is still important that both these Bills be put into the hands of the public during the parliamentary winter break to allow CBH Ltd and the Grain Pool to consult with growers. I propose to do that through a Green Bill process. I will probably have the first of those Bills - the Grain Pool Bill - ready within about two weeks, which will still give industry reasonable time in which to consider the Bills over the winter break. The CBH Bill will be ready a little later than that, but it is a quite simple Bill and really relates only to the deletion of all or part of sections 8 and 9 of the Bulk Handling Act. The short answer is yes; the Government is more or less on track. I would have liked to be about two weeks further advanced, but some complex issues still need to be resolved.

The PRESIDENT: That was not the short answer. Members got both the short and the long answer.