

LIVESTOCK HANDLING COMPLEX, LOCATION

880. Hon M.J. CRIDDLE to the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:

An article in today's *Farm Weekly* has the headline "Yards shock: land not for sale." Two people expressed views in the article. One farming group expressed concern and surprise that the land is not available because people have indicated that they will not sell the land.

- (1) Given all the work that has been carried out, why did consultation not take place?
- (2) Will the minister give a commitment that consultation will be carried out in the very near future?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

- (1)-(2) The Meat Industry Authority report that was released for public comment on the options that are available for the location of the new livestock handling complex, really did just that; it sought people's views on the available options. It would have been entirely inappropriate for the MIA to have arranged the purchase of land, because that would have pre-empted the public consultation process. The process is very important. The new saleyards will replace the Midland saleyards, which have been there for 100 years. It involves major planning decisions which should not be pre-empted. I do not know why anybody thought that the MIA had pre-empted the discussion document and organised the purchase of, or had purchased, the land. Again, I do not know why people claim to have been told that was the case, despite the illogical process that it would have involved. I can say that in a meeting between the MIA and the President of the Pastoralists and Graziers Association, Mr Barry Court, on 30 October 2001, Mr Court was told that the land was not secured. I do not understand why anybody thinks that it was secured, even though that would have been an illogical outcome.

Other issues arose out of the media report. The question provides me with an opportunity of canvassing those issues. One related to the availability of land generally, and that is implied within the member's question. The other was the cost of the land, which was referred to in the article but not implied in the member's question. I believe that two landowners have indicated that they are not prepared to sell; in fact, far more than two blocks of land have been identified as possible locations. If two landowners in the Muchea-Bullsbrook area do not want to sell to the MIA, I accept that; but there are far more landowners in that area. That is made clear in section 20.2 of the authority's report in which it identified that several sites in the Bullsbrook-Muchea area were considered prior to the preferred site being selected for more detailed evaluation.

Another issue that arises is the matter of cost. It is true that the Valuer General's Office advised the MIA that the value of a block of land was \$1.2 million. I believe that people have gone to schedule 3 of the report, seen that more than one block of land is identified, and assumed that the VGO applied a valuation of \$1.2 million to the whole area of 357 hectares. In fact, the valuation was for a much smaller area of land - I think something in the order of 230 hectares. I am happy to provide more detail if people want it. It is a shame that the journalist involved did not take the trouble to contact us prior to writing the article. Ample land is available, but it would be quite improper for the MIA to negotiate the sale of land before a decision is made, because the decision may well be made not to locate the saleyards in that area.