

BINNU ACCORD

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

- (1) Can the minister advise the current status of the “Binnu Accord” agreed to in principle by the previous Director General of Agriculture with farmers in the Binnu area, through the Pastoralists and Graziers Association?
- (2) Can the minister indicate whether the department intends to proceed with this accord to focus on the three components of land research and development in the areas relating to -
 - (a) the assessment of the salinity problems on land already cleared, with cooperation between all farmers, research institutions and State and federal Governments to address these issues;
 - (b) identification of undeveloped land in salinity prone areas, with a view to obtaining state-federal funding to assist owners of this land with equity adjustment; and
 - (c) identification of undeveloped land in “salinity safe” areas with approval where appropriate for the further development of this land?
- (3) Can the minister also table an audit of drilling work in the Binnu area to identify salinity risk in this area?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

I thank Hon Murray Criddle for some notice of his question.

- (1) The “Binnu Accord” is a term coined by the Pastoralists and Graziers Association following a meeting it arranged in the district last April with the then Director General of Agriculture, Dr Graeme Robertson. Following the meeting, Dr Robertson wrote to the PGA and proposed seven actions that the Department of Agriculture would pursue to progress the matter. Of those actions, four were completed last year. Of the remaining three matters, I advise the following. First, the analysis of regional resource information was completed last year, and the results discussed in a workshop in the district on 23 March of this year. Demonstration sites are proposed to be established this winter. Second, the proposed case-by-case reviews of the soil conservation notices issued following the clearing of land in breach of the Soil and Land Conservation Act 1945 will commence on 5 April, and be finalised in the coming weeks. Third, in relation to soil conservation notice appeals, the landholders concerned agreed to hold those over pending the outcomes of the case-by-case reviews.
- (2) (a)-(c) The Department of Agriculture will continue to progress those components that were proposed last year by Dr Robertson. However, of the three components identified by the honourable member, only the first component falls within the scope of those actions agreed to by the then director general. In relation to those components, I advise that the department has undertaken an assessment of salinity on cleared land. The first meeting to present the results of preliminary investigations was held at the Binnu Hall on 23 March 2004. The department has secured funding to carry out further work this year.
- (3) No. I would need some notice to table such an audit of drilling work in the Binnu area to identify salinity risks. However, I am pleased to table bore data currently to hand. That data indicates salinity of water at depths ranging from 4.3 metres to 9.3 metres. It indicates salinity at a little over 11 200 parts salt per million. For members’ reference, and I have just consulted the former opposition spokesman on water resources, potable water is about 800 parts salt per million. Therefore, water with 11 200 parts salt per million has a very high concentration. I table that spreadsheet with the response.

[See paper No 2055.]