

MUCHEA AND NORTHAM SALEYARDS

52. Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I refer to the Muchea and Northam saleyards. The minister was quoted in the local rural press as saying that a \$4 million contribution to a multi-species saleyard at Northam would not be unreasonable if it met industry standards.

- (1) Is it expected that construction of the Northam saleyards will be pursued?
- (2) When will the Muchea saleyards be completed?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

I was halfway through getting the answer ready in my mind and the member changed tact at the last moment. I think the question was: will the Northam proponents pursue their objectives?

Hon Murray Criddle: My question was: is it intended to pursue the Northam saleyards and when will the Muchea saleyards be completed, given your quote in the newspaper?

Hon KIM CHANCE: I understood the member's question correctly.

- (1) It is something that only the Northam proponents could answer. I will advise the member on what I have done with the case from the Northam proponents, which is led by the Shire of Northam but involves a number of other local government authorities, including the Northam Town Council. They believed they had a proposition that would work. The funding estimates of their proposition potentially presented significant cost savings for the government and, by virtue of that, to the industry.

I have always had some concern about whether the Northam proponents' proposition met what I knew to be the demands of industry in respect of the services provided by the facility and the size of the facility. However, I felt, as I had previously with the proposal from the Shire of Moora for a cattle facility, that they had to be given every possible chance of demonstrating to, firstly, the government and, secondly, the industry that their proposition did meet the expectations of the industry.

As a result, I applied a time line to the proponents and, at the same time - effectively there would have been only a day's difference in it - I advised the Western Australian Meat Industry Authority that the cabinet had given the go ahead for it to call tenders. I knew that there would be a time lag in the pre-tender process. That dictated the time window that I provided to the Northam proponents. I told them that if they could get to me by a certain date - I think it was 13 March - a proposition that stands up on an apples with apples comparison with what WAMIA is doing so that we, the government and industry, could make a genuine apples with apples comparison of the two proposals, then I would look at it in an unbiased way. Northam met the deadline and they got to me on or before the deadline date a proposal that they believe meets the parameters I set for them. On the day I received it, I sent the proposal back to the department for consultation.

I am not able to judge whether the proposition they gave me meets the standards that we sought, because it will require discussions with outside groups, most notably the WA Livestock Salesmen's Association, essentially Elders and Wesfarmers, which is the user of the facility.

- (2) Giving time lines is always a difficult issue, especially as we have not let the tenders. We have gone to tender on the first stage of the preparation for the facility so, hopefully, the earthworks will be done before the depth of winter sets in. It has been speculated in the media that towards the end of 2008 would be a conclusion date. I have no reason to doubt that is more or less accurate. When we have received all the tenders, we will be in a clearer position to identify a time line, because the tenders will contain their own time lines.