

MUCHEA LIVESTOCK CENTRE — FEE INCREASES

**240. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:**

I refer to the fee increases at Muchea saleyards that are due to take effect on 1 July.

- (1) Is it the minister's intention to wholly or partly privatise the Muchea saleyards, and is the fee increase designed to make the saleyards more attractive to private investors?
- (2) Will the minister rule out whole or part privatisation of the Katanning, Mt Barker, Boyanup and Muchea saleyards; and, if not, why not?
- (3) Can the minister reassure the farming community that the state government will provide for the much-needed upgrade or replacement of the Katanning, Boyanup and Mt Barker saleyards to provide facilities similar to those at Muchea; and, if not, why not?

**Mr D.T. REDMAN replied:**

- (1)–(3) I thank the member for Collie–Preston for the question. It is an important question. Concerns about saleyard fees were highlighted in some of the regional newspapers. I refer to when the Liberal–National Government first took office. One of the first decisions I made and took to cabinet was the decision to build the Muchea saleyards.

Several members interjected.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Fundamentally, it is one of the single biggest investments and show of support by a state government in the industry of agriculture and food in Western Australia. It was pleasing to have the Premier there recently to open that wonderful facility. It has been well received by industry. After eight years of procrastination on that issue from the former government, we have finally been able to make decisions and get industry a state-of-the-art facility.

There are three other points to the member's question. He talked about increases in fees. Yes; there will be a fee increase. There has not been an increase for some time now and it is only reasonable that that should happen. It is important for the Western Australian Meat Industry Authority to organise its finances to make its business work. In doing that, it needs to look at a fee increase. Presently, WAMIA is engaging with industry on exactly that issue to get the industry's views on it. I am not backing away from that; however, the quantum and so on are yet to be determined.

The member referred to the notion of privatising saleyards. The Western Australian saleyard strategy, which in essence is the regional saleyard strategy and which I think was put in place by the former government, refers to four key saleyards: Muchea, Katanning, Mt Barker and Boyanup. The member for Collie–Preston will be all too familiar with that. We have taken the first step and put Muchea in place. We are now considering options for the other three saleyards. The Liberal–National government has undertaken to progress that regional saleyards strategy. That was an election commitment, and it is something that I am committed to. We will deliver an outcome for the agricultural industry in Western Australia in this term of government. I will not dismiss the option of private investment in saleyards. We need to get good value for the taxpayers' dollar, and the member for Collie–Preston would have done exactly the same when in government. I guess the point he is making is that the taxpayers' dollar is of less value than anyone else's dollar. It is not; it is exactly the same dollar that comes out of our pockets. We need to make sure that we get value for money when making a decision on where to invest taxpayers' money, which, in this case, will be spent on the regional saleyards.

Several members interjected.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** The member needs to listen to his pseudo-leader over here!

We have been working through an extensive process to build up a business case around how we might manage that next investment.

Several members interjected.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** There is one more to talk to here, member!

**The SPEAKER:** I observe that the member for Collie–Preston would like to hear the answer to this question. I think the minister is endeavouring to provide that. I call the member for Warnbro for the first time.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. In summary, yes, there will be a fee increase, but the quantum is being determined. I will not dismiss the option of private investment in saleyards. I am working through a business case to see how that might work.

This Liberal–National government is committed to the regional saleyard strategy and will deliver an outcome for the agricultural and food industry in Western Australia.