

GRAIN LICENSING AUTHORITY

515. Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the Minister for Agriculture and Forestry:

I have provided notice of this question.

- (1) With regard to the Grain Licensing Authority, what moneys have been withheld from Western Australia as a result of the National Competition Council Reviews in the years 2003-04 and 2004-05?
- (2) Has the Grain Licensing Authority issued licences that companies have not used in previous years in the same market?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

Hon Murray Criddle advised that he had given notice of this question. However, I have not seen the question, so I will reply to it as a question without notice.

- (1) It is difficult to define, with any degree of precision, what money has been withheld under national competition policy payments for grain marketing from Western Australia. Grain marketing arrangements are subject to a pool of suspension rather than the withholding of competition policy payments. Off the top of my head, I think the extent of that pool is about \$14.7 million. It includes a range of issues far wider than grain marketing, some of which are big issues. Importantly, they include retail trading hours. A considerable number of issues are involved. We will have some clarity about this very soon. The National Competition Council was expected to advise the federal Treasurer by the end of this month of its recommendations on the issues involved in the suspension pool, so we expect that to happen this week. The federal Treasurer will then determine how much he will fine the people of Western Australia over the issues that have been identified, based on the advice the federal Treasurer receives from the National Competition Council. I could guess what proportion of that money is represented by the grain industry, but it would be no more an informed guess than any member of this house could make.

Hon Murray Criddle: Can you get that information?

Hon KIM CHANCE: No. The National Competition Council refused to disaggregate the suspension pool. It has never done that; it has always lumped a group of issues together in what it calls the suspension pool. Only the suspension pool gross number is ever identified by the National Competition Council. Those figures are not available. If the member has some way of getting them from the council, he might let me know the answer.

- (2) This part of the question is another matter. The question should be directed to the GLA. My best answer to that question without notice is no. If I understand the question correctly - namely, if a licence was issued in 2004-05, has the same licence been reissued in 2005-06 - the answer is no. All 2005-06 licences, of which I believe some have been issued this month, were issued prior to 30 July. All of them were new licences. Off the top of my head, they amount to some 460 000 tonnes of barley and some 88 000 tonnes of canola. Those figures represent 17 and 15 per cent, respectively, of the expected production of barley and canola in Western Australia. The amount of grain that is historically shipped under special export licences has so far rarely been over 50 per cent. Although last year approximately 22 per cent of production was subject to special export licences, a little less than half of that was actually shipped; so only about 11 per cent of our production was actually shipped.