

MUCHEA SALEYARDS

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

There is no notice of this question. On 31 May, in the minister's answer to me about the Muchea yards, he said that \$16 million would be made available for the development of those saleyards and ancillary developments. In view of regional development, will any money be made available to the Northam and Katanning yards? The minister would be well and truly aware of the proposals that are in the wings for those areas.

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

I thank Hon Murray Criddle for the question. Hon Murray Criddle asked: will any money be made available for Northam and Katanning? It is highly unlikely that funds would be made available for Northam, since it conflicts, as a service provider within the same area, with the government's intention to proceed with Muchea. Katanning is a different question, because the government sees Katanning as one of the highly strategic saleyard sites, those being Muchea and Katanning for sheep, Mt Barker for great southern cattle and, hopefully in the not-too-distant future, a single site for a south west cattle saleyard facility. At this stage the government has not made a decision to specifically set aside funds for a regional saleyard infrastructure purpose, which could be used to assist Katanning and Mt Barker, with some of its ongoing issues, or the single south west saleyard. However, it remains my ambition that Muchea should probably carry a degree of debt to provide a more equitable situation. If, for example, the state were to provide Muchea as a debt-free facility, whereas local government was, in the main, providing debt-funded facilities, it would create - to my mind - a situation contrary to competitive neutrality principles. That is an issue that I will keep raising within government. At this stage I have to say that there is no provision. However, it is my ambition to ultimately achieve a situation in which the Muchea facility carries a degree of debt to assist regional saleyards. I am also aware that to do that, some legislative amendment to the Western Australian Meat Industry Authority Act may be required, although it would not be a major amendment. It is a worthy ambition that the government will keep striving towards.