

GENE TECHNOLOGY AGREEMENT

**88. Hon JIM SCOTT to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:**

- (1) On what day did Premier Gallop sign the intergovernmental Gene Technology Agreement?
- (2) Can the Premier confirm that New South Wales, Tasmania and the Northern Territory had not signed the agreement at that time?
- (3) Is the Premier aware that as Western Australia was the fourth signatory to the agreement, the Premier's signature enabled the agreement to come into effect?
- (4) Does Labor's election platform on genetically modified organisms still propose a five-year moratorium on the growing of GMOs; and, if not, will the Premier inform the House if and when this policy change occurred and what mandate he had for the change of policy?
- (5) If the Government's policy has not changed, how will the policy outcome be achieved?

**Hon KIM CHANCE replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1)-(3) I have an answer to these parts of the question. I am not satisfied with the answer that I have, because a question has arisen about whether some elements of the answer I have been provided with are correct. While there is some doubt, I would rather not provide those answers, and I will provide them at a later date.
- (4) Labor's direction statement of September 2000 on genetically modified organisms states -

Apply a five-year moratorium to the use of GMO material in agriculture for commercial production and the importation of such materials for food crops that are the product of genetic manipulation. This moratorium will apply except as permitted under specific protocols that will be developed for this purpose;

That is the other half of the undertaking that is often dismissed. It goes on -

Apply a five-year moratorium to field trials of GM crops within recognised farming areas unless these trials have been specifically approved under protocols that will be established for this purpose;

Again, for both production and field trials, there is a codicil to the moratorium relating to protocols. My statement to the House in May 2001 outlined progress on such protocols, and in particular the introduction of the national regulatory scheme for gene technology and the importance of public disclosure of trial site locations in which the Department of Agriculture has some involvement. The Government strongly supports continued field evaluation of GM crop technology compliant with the national gene technology regulatory system - that is, the protocols - administered by the Commonwealth's Gene Technology Regulator.

With regard to the applications for commercial release of GM crops in Western Australia, it is important to note that the Commonwealth has responsibility for managing risks to human health and safety and the environment. The States have jurisdiction over possible risks to markets arising from GM crops; and, to this end, the Gene Technology Ministerial Council is preparing a policy principle that will cause the Gene Technology Regulator to recognise areas designated under state law for the purpose of preserving the identity of GM and/or non-GM crops for marketing purposes. The Government has already undertaken extensive public consultation on the role that GM-free zones may play in managing possible risks to markets. My strong position on this matter is that we will not support the commercial release of a GM crop unless satisfied that there will be no detrimental impact on markets for non-GM crops, and that any additional identity preservation and segregation costs will be met by those making use of GM varieties. In other words, there will be no cost shifting from GM producers to non-GM producers.

- (5) The Government remains prepared to implement GM-free zones, including on a statewide basis if necessary, should commercial GM production be assessed to threaten the marketability of Western Australian non-GM crops.

I hope to be able to provide answers to parts (1) to (3) of the question as soon as we have resolved the inconsistency.