GENETICALLY ENGINEERED CROPS, MORATORIUM

465.   Hon J.A. SCOTT to the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:

(1)   Will the five-year moratorium on the commercial release of genetically engineered crops remain in place on the passing of the Western Australian Gene Technology Bill 2001?

(2)   How will the moratorium be effective in cases in which the proponents apply to the Gene Technology Regulator for the commercial release of GE material in Western Australia?

(3)   By what process does the minister intend to designate GE-free zones and GE zones, and will growers within a GE zone be allowed to grow non-GE crops?

(4)   What resources are available to monitor compliance with GE zone requirements?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

(1)   It is my intention that the moratorium on the release of genetically modified crops be put in place and remain in place until I am assured that risks to health, safety, the environment, the State's agricultural sector and trade in agricultural products are addressed.

(2)-(3)   The passing of the Western Australian Gene Technology Bill 2001 will enable GM-free zones or GM zones to be designated by regulations made under the Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Act 1976. The intent behind designated areas will be, in the case of a GM-free area, to prevent the growing of GM crops in that area.

(4)   The scheme for the regulation of gene technology is a national scheme. As such, and as required by the intergovernmental agreement, costs will be shared between the Commonwealth and the States in due course. The precise details of the cost-sharing arrangements have yet to be worked out. Suffice to say, the Government will be seeking an overall allocation of resources that reflects the importance of the scheme and a state contribution that is fair and reasonable.

I have a more comprehensive version of this answer which I will also provide to the member.