

EMU PROOF FENCE

Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) Does the minister recognise the value of the emu proof fence to agriculture?
- (2) Is there a commitment to maintain the fence as a barrier to emu infestation of the agricultural region?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

I thank Hon Murray Criddle for the question. It is one I would have preferred to consider at more length.

- (1)-(2) The emu proof fence, as the member is aware, has a considerable history. It is now ageing and has been experiencing maintenance problems for many years. That maintenance is carried out in conjunction with local landowners. The best answer I can give, without consulting the Department of Agriculture, is that I do believe that the emu proof fence is vital.

Hon Murray Criddle: That is the commitment people want.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Certainly, and I am happy to give that commitment. The importance of the emu proof fence has been proved on a number of occasions over the past three decades. In the drought in the northern wheatbelt in 1976, the fence prevented a huge wave of emus from crossing into the agricultural area. This year the anomalies towards the end of the fence - by this I do not mean failed areas - caused serious problems for farmers, particularly where the fence trails off in the Esperance region. Considerable help, including the supply of ammunition, was provided to landowners in that area. Even so, landowners, and one in particular, incurred significant financial losses. The impact of the emu proof fence is not underestimated. I have a personal commitment to its continuation, and I hope that cooperative relationships with landowners associated with the fence will continue. I may need to take further briefing before I can answer this question more fully.