

NORTHERN WHEATBELT AND GASCOYNE REGION, EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES
APPLICATION

Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the Minister for Agriculture:

I see the minister is in the Geraldton papers as having attended the Gascoyne muster, although I did not see him there. My question relates to the fact that it is dry in the northern wheatbelt and also through that Gascoyne area. I ask the minister to recognise that factor, because telephone calls in the last day or so have indicated there is a real problem in that area, particularly from the point of view of apprentices who are losing the opportunity to work. That has an immediate impact on the pastoral industry in the area.

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

I thank the member for raising this serious issue. I affirm the statement Hon Murray Criddle made. However, the article is incorrect because I was not at the Gascoyne muster. I wish I could have been there, but I was returning from a ministerial conference at the time. I believe it was a successful event.

Hon Murray Criddle: It was good for information, but not much else.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Sometimes information is power.

The seasonal situation in the Gascoyne is very difficult, as it is in the northern part of the wheatbelt. I hope that Hon Murray Criddle's question is a portent because it has been forecast that there could be substantial rain in the region tonight. If it rains tonight, I will be more than happy to give Hon Murray Criddle credit for it.

Hon Ken Travers: Share some of it!

Hon KIM CHANCE: I will share the credit.

This issue was raised with me in a single phone call from the Pastoralists and Graziers Association. I was also informed that a case for an exceptional circumstance application was being prepared for me to consider. I await further details on that matter. In the meantime, and as a direct result of the member's question, I will seek a briefing from the Department of Agriculture to bring me up to date on the issues of the area and to determine whether an application for exceptional circumstances assistance may be appropriate.