

GENETICALLY MODIFIED CANOLA — EUROPEAN UNION'S CONCERNS

135. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I refer to correspondence received by the government from European Union traders AgroTrace, Eurograin and Holtermann expressing great concern about importing genetically modified canola from Western Australia.

- (1) When was the minister first made aware of these EU concerns and what response has he provided to the EU?
- (2) Has the minister advised all Western Australian GM growers that their canola crops are very likely to be refused by the EU?
- (3) Has the minister written to all WA GM growers to highlight their obligations, and has he published a public register that will allow all farmers and interested parties, including the EU, to know who has planted or is intending to plant GM canola crops and the location of those crops, as promised by the member for South Perth in this house on 10 March?

Mr D.T. REDMAN replied:

- (1)–(3) I thank the member for the question, and he is quite right. I picked up via the media the notion of a letter that was highlighted in a media release that came from, I think, Mr Phelps with an attachment of a letter that went to the Premier. We did a search of both my office and the Premier's office with the system that is there and we could not find the letter. Therefore, to the best of my understanding we do not have such a letter. I venture to add that we also had a conversation with Co-operative Bulk Handling, which, of course, is the dominant exporter of canola in Western Australia. It does not trade directly with any of the three companies that were signatories to the letter in respect of Europe that was supposedly sent to the Premier. The point that I have made all the way through this whole debate about genetically modified crops and the basis for the decision that the Western Australian government made was on the background that there are no threats to the marketing of Western Australian GM canola going forward. Japan is a dominant purchaser of our grain, and it purchased 85 per cent of its canola from Canada, which is GM canola. We stand on what is actually happening out there in the business community, not a far removed position that the opposition takes on this issue, which, yes, is a contentious issue. However, when it comes down to the tintacks of how businesses operate, growers will only grow what they know they can sell; if they cannot sell it, they will not grow it—it is as simple as that.