

FOOD SAFETY STANDARDS

**189. Hon J.A. SCOTT to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:**

- (1) Is the Minister for Health aware that the federal Government has introduced legislation to give the food industry a stronger role in determining national food safety standards affecting issues of labelling and the identification of genetically modified foods, and that under this legislation state health ministers will no longer be able to amend such standards, only approve or reject them?
- (2) Is the minister aware that the Australia New Zealand Food Authority board, which has had one industry representative, will be replaced with a new body dominated by the food industry?
- (3) Did the Western Australian Minister for Health agree with the handing over of these powers to the industry?
- (4) Is the minister concerned that this will undermine the proper scrutiny of food safety in Western Australia?
- (5) If the minister has agreed to the federal legislation, will he inform the House what steps he has taken to ensure that consumers in Western Australia are aware of and are happy with this decision?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1) The minister is aware of the proposed legislation currently before federal Parliament.
- (2) The Bill to which the member referred has been discussed by a senate committee. The composition of the board is one issue under discussion. The Western Australian Government has maintained that the board should have a balance between industry, consumer and professional representation. The minister understands that several of the amendments proposed by the senate committee are not acceptable to the Commonwealth or to other jurisdictions, including Western Australia.
- (3) No. The Western Australian Government has advised the federal Government of its concern with the proposed amendments. The suggestion of handing these powers to industry is speculative.
- (4) The Western Australian Government will not accept a system that does not provide proper scrutiny of food safety in Western Australia.
- (5) Not applicable. The amendments proposed by the senate committee are unacceptable to Western Australia. Should they be progressed, the Western Australian Government would reconsider its participation in the national food industry regulatory system.