

ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE ACT — IMPLEMENTATION

438. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question. Do the concerned voices of community members, stakeholders, industry and the Premier's own department not matter?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

Absolutely they matter, which is why the government has been at pains to ensure that we work closely with the community to answer their questions, to help them understand their obligations and the ways in which the updated laws will apply, and to make sure they have all the information they need. That is why we have been holding community forums right across the state. The department is sitting, almost around the clock, talking to different industry groups and representatives of those industry groups to make sure we continue to provide information and work collaboratively, cooperatively and in an educated manner to bring these laws into play.

As I have said, these laws are an update of 50-year-old laws that have been in place since 1972, so it is time for us to implement a modern framework for these laws. They are not everyone's cup of tea; there have been criticisms from the Aboriginal community and the farming community and there have been concerns voiced everywhere, but we have the balance right. These laws are in place and they are ready to go, and that is why we are committing to the 1 July start date. The member makes the comment that somehow everything is not in place; it is. There is one set of guidelines on which we are continuing to consult with industry, and with a good week and a half to go, we are keen to make sure we take every opportunity to undertake that consultation and make sure that everyone is comfortable and ready to go.

I understand that whenever laws are updated and people are brought into a modern legal framework, it raises questions in people's minds and sometimes creates some degree of anxiety, but we are working closely with the community and all industry groups to make sure that they understand their obligations—obligations that have been in place for 50 years, and now that we have modernised these laws they will continue to be in place, but will be simpler and fairer and will acknowledge that like-for-like activity will continue to be allowed.