

The farm water grants scheme encourages farmers to improve on-farm water supply infrastructure, to help resolve current water shortages and to prepare for future water demands. It encourages farmers to plan and implement water supply improvements, such as new dams and catchments, rainwater tanks and bore installation. This government decided to make the changes to the farm water grants scheme to bolster confidence amongst the farming community, and the additional \$2 million for farm water grants in the dry season assistance scheme 2006 provided further support. The Carpenter government will continue with initiatives that encourage all water users to value and conserve our most precious resource and to ensure that water is used as efficiently as possible for our future and the future of all Western Australians.

SCHOOLS - HEALTHY FOOD AND DRINK CHOICES POLICY

Grievance

MR G.M. CASTRILLI (Bunbury) [9.12 am]: I bring to the attention of the Minister for Education and Training concerns within my electorate about the healthy food and drink choices policy that has been implemented in schools this year. I have met with a number of canteen managers who wish to emphasise that they do not disagree with the healthy options plan; indeed, they applaud the initiative. However, they are extremely distressed by the grey areas that exist. Also of concern is the limited time frame that has been given to implement the first stage; that is, the requirement to remove all the red choices by the end of term 1. As the minister is aware, the announcement by the Premier about the policy and standards was made only in December 2006. With the frantic end to the school year and the equally frantic start to the school term this year, schools were given only one term in which to implement the change, and that is unrealistic.

All the canteens in the Bunbury electorate are run by parents and citizens associations, have one paid manager and are reliant on volunteers. Without exception, I am advised by the schools that the managers are already working beyond their hours of pay and that the volume of work and time involved for canteen managers to explore options, seek approvals and source and deliver these options, while still operating the canteens, makes the term 1 deadline impractical. What has compounded this problem is that the information and advice they have received verbally has been contradicted by the information they have received in writing. One canteen manager rang the Western Australian School Canteen Association to ask for the chocolate cookie recipe on page 39 of the brochure and she was told that the recipe had not been invented yet. There is certainly confusion and frustration. All the canteen managers in my electorate have undertaken considerable nutrition workshops to understand the value of foods, and prior to the announced policy they had implemented a number of healthy options and were continuing to work towards introducing healthier menus. Under the new policy, canteen managers have no ability to make decisions about what can be served in their canteens; all food must first be approved by WASCA. They must get permission before anything can be sold, and I am talking about every individual item of food sold in the canteen. That means that on an unexpected cold day, the canteen manager could no longer whip up a pot of soup from available vegetables. She would first have to get the homemade recipe approved, and how would she do that? She would have to list, measure and weigh all the ingredients, weigh each portion of the completed product and send this application to WASCA for its approval. We have been advised by the executive officer of WASCA that this process will be completed as quickly as possible, and in most cases within 10 working days. That would mean that it would be too late for the canteen manager to make soup on that cold day, but maybe she could make it on the next cold day. However, if the canteen manager did not have the number of potatoes that was registered in the original recipe on that cold day, she would not be able to make the soup, because the soup must be exactly to the recipe; no variations are allowed without approval.

I return to the within 10 working days guarantee. One of my canteens advised that it had waited more than four weeks for approval of the locally available muffin mix that the Bunbury schools have used. After four and a half weeks, that canteen received advice that the muffin mix was declared a red food and could not be used. The muffin mix that has been approved by WASCA is not available through the regional distributor. WASCA will not provide the ingredients list for the approved mix, so local canteens are unable to find a similar product. No explanation was given for why the locally available muffin mix was not approved. It is difficult to understand what the unacceptable mix could contain that is so bad, considering that WASCA is not interested in preservatives. Why is one muffin mix better than another? It begs the question: is it a commercial decision? The producers of the approved muffin mix paid \$500 to WASCA to be registered in the buyers guide. The producers of the locally available muffin mix have not. If anyone looked at the WASCA buyers guide, he or she could be excused for thinking that it was a commercial publication, not a government-backed document. I ask the minister: is the approval process biased towards the companies that can afford to pay the \$500 registration fee for each item they sell in competition with smaller companies - and certainly with the local bakery? Is the government getting involved in a commercial sphere that it should not be involved in? Is it promoting commercial businesses? Once again it appears that the government has made a policy that is city-centric. Many of the products registered in the buyers guide are not available in regional areas. Will the government pay for the freight to have these products delivered to regional areas? Whatever happened to the Buy Local policy? Has

the government considered how this will affect small businesses? It seems not. The executive officer of WASCA uses Mt Lawley High School canteen as an example of the correct way to operate a canteen. However, the executive officer fails to mention that Mt Lawley High School canteen is run by a contractor and is purely a commercial venture.

Some students in regional areas, particularly those in upper high schools, travel long distances from rural areas each day. Many have breakfast on arrival at school. Under the new policy, savoury commercial products can be served only twice a week. With only one paid staff member, who already starts her working day at 6.00 am, it is not possible to produce from scratch products such as pikelets early enough for students to consume prior to the start of school lessons. Canteens cannot serve the existing muffin mix that they have served in the past, and they cannot source the approved muffin mix locally. The advice from WASCA is that, under those circumstances, students should be given yoghurt, fruit, milk drinks and juices. This is not substantial enough for many year 12 students. I understand that there is only one set of criteria for both primary and secondary schools. Little thought seems to have been given to the nutritional needs of children, with the same sized drinks being recommended for grade 1 students and 17-year-old students. Anyone who has a growing 17-year-old will know that the quantities that those students consume are vastly different from those consumed by a small child.

Again, no-one can fault the intention of the initiative of the "traffic-light" policy. However, the practical implications indicate that it is bureaucracy gone mad. I urge the minister to review the details of the process. I urge the minister to consider regional areas in this review. I urge the minister to further examine what is practical and to broaden the criteria to allow canteen managers the discretion to use their own commonsense, knowledge and experience. I also urge the minister to implement a consultation process to allow parents and citizens associations to voice their concerns and suggestions. I stress again that nobody is against the policy; in fact, everyone applauds the initiative. Its implementation is just bureaucracy gone mad. I hope the minister considers a review so that the policy can be simplified.

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham - Minister for Education and Training) [9.18 am]: I thank the member for Bunbury for his grievance on the issue of food in school canteens. At the start of this year, three major changes took place: first, it was made compulsory for students up to year 10 to participate in two hours of sport at school; secondly, we introduced a new uniform policy, which is a much more strict regime for school uniforms in public schools; and, thirdly, we implemented the healthy food and drink policy in school canteens. I appreciate the fact that the member for Bunbury does not object to the intent. However, whenever these new policies come in, there will always be some dissent and some difficulties around the edges. During my visits to schools and so forth I have been lobbied considerably by people saying that we should stick with some of the more unhealthy foods in schools. My view is that we will not be going back to that. So many schools have their own reasons that they should be able to retain red "traffic light" food. If every special case were allowed to proceed, the policy would be meaningless. The policy basically recognises the fact that we now have, according to the statistics, a childhood obesity problem amongst our young people. We are doing our bit at schools to try to fix that through compulsory sport and recreation and healthy food. A lot of parents will not like the changes, and although most canteens really like them, some are not particularly happy with them, but that is the rule and it will not be changing.

The member for Bunbury raised issues to do with muffin mix. He was speaking very quickly, but as I understand it -

Mr G.M. Castrilli: I had to fit it into the 10 minutes.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It was a machine-gun presentation. I was trying to get it straight in my head. I understand that the member for Bunbury was trying to say that muffin mix sourced locally may not meet the broader criteria set out by the Western Australian School Canteens Association and there is therefore discrimination between the local muffin mix and the muffin mix available in the city. I would have appreciated the member letting me know the exact subject of his grievance beforehand so I could have sourced some answers on the muffin mix imbroglio. According to the advice I have, foods categorised as red will no longer be served after the conclusion of term 2.

Mr G.M. Castrilli: I thought it was term 1.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The advice I have is that it is term 2. That is the first point raised by the member for Bunbury.

The second point related to the member's concerns about the advice that the Western Australian School Canteens Association might be giving. There will always be differences in advice given to someone on the phone when a new program starts. These things are being worked through. I encourage the member's canteens to work with WASCA to ensure that these issues are resolved. I understand that an issue surrounds the local content of products, not just of muffin mix but other products as well. The Star Choice Registered Products Buyer's Guide, which is the ordinary way products are sourced, is slightly contentious in some areas and obviously the member's area is one. That is currently under review. It is difficult to source suppliers in non-

metropolitan areas, and we may be able to come up with specific local arrangements to meet local needs, provided that the food offered to children is healthy.

We are working on the issue raised by the member for Bunbury. I cannot answer the member's question directly about the muffin mix in Bunbury. I will certainly follow that up and get some specific advice.

Mr G.M. Castrilli: The other thing is that WASCA will not give them the ingredients of the muffin mix, so they can't compare one with the other. Being in a buyer's guide, they say they're not interested in preservatives, so they can't understand the problem. It will be a great help if you could sort that out for us.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will do my best to sort out the muffin mix situation in Bunbury. I will find out what the position is so that we can get some advice back to the member. I know that some canteens are unhappy that red foods will have to be consumed by that date. That is the rule and it will not be changing.

Mr G.M. Castrilli: Some of the students are leaving the schools, walking down to the shops just a few metres down the road and buying all that red food stuff anyway.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I recognise that that is happening in some schools. We try to give a degree of autonomy to schools. I encourage those schools to take some steps to address that situation. We are trying to keep kids fit and healthy whilst they are under our control. I cannot close the McDonald's or the Hungry Jack's down the street, neither can the principals, but the principals have some control over the behaviour of students leaving school grounds during school hours. I encourage them to take some steps so that children eat healthy foods.

LEFT TURNS AT RED TRAFFIC LIGHTS

Grievance

MR J.N. HYDE (Perth) [9.25 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. It concerns the issue of making a left turn at red traffic lights. I believe that Western Australia should examine the issue of allowing a left turn at red lights to fight climate change and traffic congestion. My electorate of Perth covers the congested central business district and the inner city. I believe that my electorate is ideal for trialling the practice, which allows cars to turn left at red traffic lights if it is safe and there is no oncoming or turning traffic. My understanding of Australian law is that it is already allowable for state jurisdictions to introduce "left turn at red" legislation. We have not endorsed it as readily as the United States, Canada and Europe. In the CBD and in much of my electorate, we have very low traffic speeds. This makes left turn at red less of a safety issue. The easing of congestion would decrease greenhouse gases from idling cars and help to combat climate change. There is sufficient United States research to support the move on safety grounds. In the United States, just 0.02 per cent of all fatalities occur at intersections that allow right turn on red. The records in the US did not discern whether that low number of fatalities occurred when the signal was red or whether it was people coming through other parts of the intersection on a red light and cleaning up somebody who was on the green light.

I am also aware of other research that says it is a safety hazard to pedestrians. Having been involved in local government and now politics for over two decades and having often heard conflicting advice and seen things that were unpalatable two years ago, suddenly when they are looked at freshly, we see that they are an advantage. Since 1980 every state in the United States has permitted right turn on red, unless specifically prohibited, at designated intersections. I say to the member for South Perth that Quebec became one of the last states or provinces in North America to adopt right turn on red. It introduced it smoothly, but with a strong safety awareness campaign, particularly for pedestrians.

All along Hay Street and St Georges Terrace in the city, which are outside our front windows of Parliament House, there are prime examples of intersections where left turn at red could be introduced safely as long as we have a strong pedestrian and cyclist awareness campaign for motorists. There are unnecessary bottlenecks all along Wellington Street. Even when I was waiting to turn left into one-way Elder Street this morning, the absence of oncoming traffic could be easily seen. It is very easy and safe to create a left-turn-at-red culture into one-way streets with ingrained safety awareness. I will use the example of Elder and Wellington Streets because some members who do not ride a bicycle use Elder Street as a short cut to get here when they drive their cars.

Many of my constituents who are retired coalminers from various parts of Western Australia have chosen to live in the central business district. People waiting at that intersection are exposed to carbon monoxide fumes whenever cars are idling. The climate-change battle must be a whole-of-government and whole-of-society issue; there is no silver bullet. It is achieved through tweaking a variety of excellent policies such as container-deposit legislation. I believe it is worth investigating this issue. If we are trying to encourage more people to come to the inner city to use sustainable living spaces, we must consider the impact of associated pollution. There is enough evidence to suggest that this state should have another look at this issue. However, many policemen from last century and others who have worked in road safety for some time may be fixated on pedestrian and cyclist safety.

I acknowledge that many motorists in Perth need to be exposed to a big safety awareness campaign. Quebec's road safety campaign was "Look not once but twice". Civic mindedness and courtesy was a key issue of its