



NO. 908 of 2006

[Signature] 26/5/06.

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE

No.

Asked on Thursday, May 25, 2006

MR HORAN asked the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries (MR MULHERIN)-

QUESTION:

My question without notice is to the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries. In the midst of the savage budget cuts made by the Minister's government to the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, with \$39 million slashed over the past three years, I ask the Minister to explain the benefit to farmers and fishers of the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries sponsorship of Queensland Opera's production of Romeo and Juliet?

ANSWER (Tabled May 26, 2006):

The Member for Toowoomba South continues to wrongly assert that there have been savage Budget cuts to the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries.

In a recent radio interview on Queensland Country Hour, the Member made comments about changes in the DPI&F budget over the last three years, from \$352 million (2002-03 Estimated Actual) to \$313 million (2005-06 Budget).

I take this opportunity to explain to the Member again the key reasons for the reduction of \$38.7 million in DPI&F's budget allocation over the last three years, so that it is clear to everyone that a reduction in allocation does not translate to a "savage cut" and certainly does not reflect a reduction in important services.

The major changes in DPI&F's funding from the 2002-03 Estimated Actual of \$352.1 million to the 2005-06 Budget of \$313.4 million include:

- The planned winding down, due to the successful implementation of the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program, under the national funding arrangements resulting in a corresponding reduction in funding in the 2005-06 Budget of \$24.5 million relative to the 2002-03 Estimated Actual of \$43.1 million – a reduction of \$18.6 million.
- A change in government policy resulted in the equity return regime being discontinued effective from July 1, 2004. In order to provide comparability with the 2005-06 Budget, equity return expenses and revenues of \$14.5 million included in the 2002-03 Estimated Actual need to be removed – a further \$14.5 million decrease.

- In the 2005-06 Budget Round, the method and manner for funding the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme (DRAS) from the Consolidated Fund was adjusted from a funding advance to funding based on an as needs basis. This funding model has been introduced to ensure that funds are available on a whole-of-government basis for the highest priority issues.

The 2002-03 Estimated Actual included \$8.8 million for DRAS payments. The 2005-06 Budget included \$3 million for DRAS payments with an additional draw down of \$3 million expected from the Consolidated Fund based on anticipated actual 2005-06 expenses prior to financial year-end – a further reduction of \$5.8 million comparing 2005-06 Budget to 2002-03 Estimated Actual and \$2.8 million comparing expected 2005-06 expenses to 2002-03 Estimated Actual.

As previously outlined, the two most significant changes (totalling \$33.1 million) to DPI&F's budget over the last three years are the discontinuation of the budget neutral equity return regime: that is, output revenues received from government matched equity return expenses paid back to Queensland Treasury, and the scheduled winding down of the fire ant eradication program as the program has moved from the baiting and aerial treatment of nests into surveillance and monitoring activities.

The continuing progress made by the eradication program for fire ants will lead to a further planned reduction in national resource requirements, and expected revenues and expenses in 2006-07.

In regard to sponsorship, the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries is not a sponsor of 'Romeo and Juliet'.

In 2005, the Department provided sponsorship to Opera Queensland's The Song Bird and Moving Opera to enable performances to school children.

The Song Bird to date has been seen by nearly 50,000 students across Queensland from Brisbane to the Gold Coast, Nambour, Rockhampton, Chinchilla, Blackbutt and Emerald.

The sponsorship of Opera Queensland's The Song Bird and Moving Opera at a cost of \$15,000 was one of a number provided by DPI&F, including the AgForce State Conference, Beef 2006, and Queensland Seafood Awards.

The Primary Industries and Fisheries portfolio has responsibility for animal welfare legislation and that includes responsibility for "companion pets."

The sponsorship agreement with Opera Queensland enabled DPI&F to distribute our animal welfare activity materials to each of the schools involved in the Song Bird program. This provided the Department with a unique opportunity to reach a target audience and to deliver our message in a very effective and innovative way.

The Department is still assessing the request from Opera Queensland to support the Song Bird program again this year.

The idea that the Department was sponsoring 'Romeo and Juliet' probably arose from the fact that, as part of the sponsorship agreement, the Department's logo is used on all Opera Queensland promotional material.

Through the sponsorship, the Department's logo has been featured alongside many other sponsors, including The Courier-Mail, Channel 9 and ABC radio in Brisbane.

Opera Queensland met all of their commitments under the sponsorship agreement in 2005 and they supplied the Department with a comprehensive report on the program.