

QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 1607
Asked on Thursday, 30 October 2008

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

QUESTION:

With reference to his plan to sell the Atherton Tableland's Southedge and most of the Kairi agricultural research stations—

- (1) Will he guarantee that the money derived from the sale of these assets will be reinvested into the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries in the Tablelands region?
- (2) Has his department received an assessment of how much they expect to receive from the sale of these assets?

ANSWER:

As previously announced, Mareeba will become one of Australia's leading regional research, training and services hub. Under this innovative plan \$8 million will be invested in the Atherton Tablelands. This will see the establishment of a new purpose-built facility in Mareeba by 2010 and further improvements at Walkamin and at the retained land at Kairi. I have made a commitment that all proceeds from the sales will be re-invested in the Tablelands and I stand by that commitment.

These plans follow an independent review of research, development and extension, education, and training needs for the Atherton Tablelands. To strengthen our commitment on the Tablelands, the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) through this state-of-the-art regional research, training and services hub will increase our ability to attract and retain high quality, key staff on the Tablelands. It will also provide a central point for industry to engage with government services including DPI&F, the Department of Natural Resources and Water and the Environmental Protection Agency.

DPI&F has developed these plans following extensive consultation with industry, staff and other stakeholders. These changes will be phased in over a number of years and access to existing research facilities will be retained while new office and research facilities are being developed.

Funds obtained from the disinvestment of assets will be used to fund the new announcements. I am advised that current valuations of properties for disinvestment are commensurate with the announced expenditure however such valuations are subject to relevant processes, for example native title and market conditions. Accordingly, funds derived from asset sales will be reinvested on the Tablelands.