

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1470

asked on Thursday, 18 October 2018

MR L MILLAR ASKED THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES, MINES AND ENERGY (HON DR A LYNHAM)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise how many new extension officers have been appointed to help Gregory landholders transition to the new vegetation management regime?

ANSWER:

The Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy has three regions. Each region has local vegetation management staff (a total of 63 across the state). These staff members talk to landholders every day about how the vegetation management laws relate to their specific situation.

The electorate of Gregory encompasses a large part of the department's Central Region, which has 23 officers involved in vegetation management duties. All of these staff contribute to servicing the needs of landholders within the Gregory electorate. Of that staffing establishment, five are based in Emerald, which is in the Gregory electorate. In order to be responsive to the needs of regional landholders, staff from Emerald frequently spend a week in Longreach. The visit dates are advertised in advance through local networks, including natural resource management groups and Agforce.

Landholder feedback in relation to extension activities such as workshops and field days indicates that landholders prefer events where their peer networks are involved. Therefore, the preferred model for such events is to support peak groups, such as Agforce and natural resource management groups.

This approach is supported by the recent rural and regional media stories highlighting that landholders are appreciative of the opportunity to discuss the changes first hand and move beyond some of the misinformation which has been spread.

This has led to productive sessions being held in or close to the boundary of the Gregory electorate since the legislative changes, such as:-

- Anakie (AgForce: 21 March 2018; 60 attendees)
- Middlemount (Fitzroy Basin Association: 24 April 2018; 12 attendees)
- AgGrow Emerald (28-30 June 2018; 40 interactions)
- Kilcummin (AgForce: 17 July 2018; 25 attendees)

As outlined previously, the department has also developed a Veg Hub over the past year that has also created business efficiencies and is delivering reliable, professional and expert advice to landholders across the state.

The five core Veg Hub staff physically located in Charleville are supported by officers around the state who are able to be called upon to deal with landholder telephone and email enquiries as call volumes demand.

Of course, some landholders prefer to be able to go into their regional office and talk face-to-face, look over a map or get an explanation of a code or guideline with a vegetation management officer. The efficiencies delivered by the Veg Hub have allowed regional staff to spend more time in face-to-face discussions and appointments.

I would encourage any landholder concerned about vegetation management on their property to contact the Veg Hub on 135 834.