

## AGRICULTURE

### Question on Notice, Transcript page 8 and 9

**Beth JONES:** Thank you, Ms Benham. The rural financial counselling service triages its clients and that is a process that they run. We have invested through this drought response. There has been an increase in funding provided to the rural financial counselling service, not a decrease.

**Jade BENHAM:** So that will go up in resources?

**Beth JONES:** It has gone up in resources. That is correct.

**Jade BENHAM:** Because even they say they are so underfunded and under-resourced that they cannot keep up with demand, particularly now. Demand is growing for the rural financial counselling service that we speak to often.

**Beth JONES:** I am not hearing six-week waitlists, Ms Benham, and the triaging is done by the rural financial counselling service. We are actively meeting with them quite frequently around the monitoring of services to see what is required, but I have not heard a six-week waitlist. That has not been communicated –

**Jade BENHAM:** Do you know what the current waitlist, according to AgVic, would be?

**Beth JONES:** My understanding is that it varies depending on where you are in the state and which service you are working with.

**Jade BENHAM:** Obviously geographically, and after the rain, each area is different. Are you able to supply me with a breakdown?

**Beth JONES:** We would need to talk to the Rural Financial Counselling Service to obtain that, but yes, I would need to take that away.

### Response:

All calls received by the Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) are triaged, with 1 to 2 weeks considered a usual wait period for the service. Urgent clients are always prioritised by the RFCS and are contacted within 1 to 3 working days.

Both the Victorian Government and Commonwealth Government have announced additional funding for the Victorian RFCS to boost resources in response to increased demand. Funding announcements are as follows:

- \$0.4 million from the Commonwealth Government to the Victorian RFCS.
- \$0.08 million from the Victorian Government to the South West RFCS.
- \$2 million from the Commonwealth Government to the RFCS across Australia (Victorian component to be advised).

This funding is in addition to \$4.1 million provided to the RFCS in the 2024-25 Victorian Budget. All of the above funding will be provided both in the current year and future financial years.