

Hillside

Farmers' year more than a celebration

THE Australian Year of the Farmer in 2012 should not only be about recognising Australian farmers for the work they do, but should also be focused on addressing a number of issues impacting on the agricultural sector, the Member for O'Connor (WA) Tony Crook has told federal parliament.

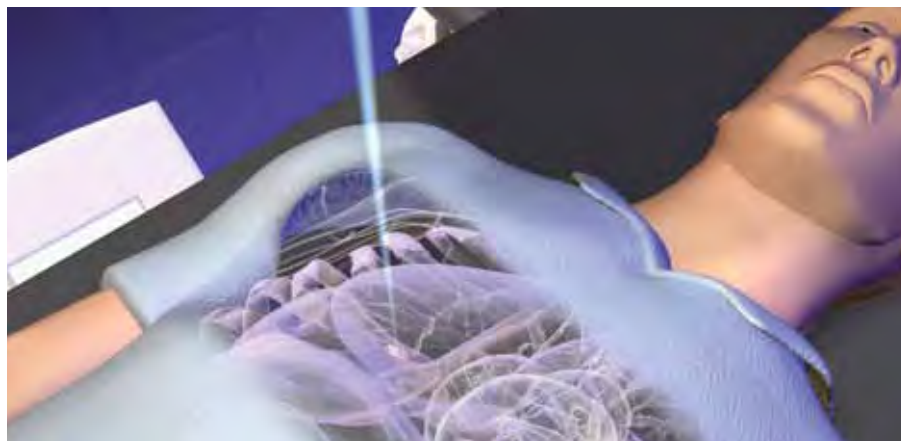
Mr Crook highlighted the importance of the agricultural sector to the Australian economy, noting that it generates \$41.8 billion each year, with \$31.2 billion of this in the export market.

"Agriculture supports 1.6 million jobs in Australia in farming and related industries, accounting for 17.2 per cent of the national workforce," he said.

Australian farmers produce almost 93 per cent of Australia's daily domestic food supply, while exporting 60 per cent of our total agricultural production.

Mr Crook said live export reforms, ongoing drought, biosecurity risks, skills shortages and supermarket pricing are the significant issues many Australian farmers face day in and day out.

"We must help our farmers so they can continue to remain on the land, driving our economy, protecting our food security and sustaining our regional communities," he said. •



SPOT ON: *CyberKnife delivers targeted radiotherapy treatment*

Remarkable cancer treatment could save lives

FEDERAL MP Alan Tudge (Aston, Vic) has called for a new cancer treatment called CyberKnife to be made available in Australia.

Mr Tudge told the House of Representatives CyberKnife delivers a far more targeted radiotherapy treatment, significantly minimising the damage to non-cancerous parts of the body. It also enables radiotherapy to be delivered to some patients who otherwise could not receive radiotherapy, in particular younger people.

"This is a remarkable technology that has the capacity to save or improve the lives of hundreds of people who are suffering from cancer," he said.

The treatment is available in 26 countries, Mr Tudge said, and should be available here.

Two constituents drew his attention to CyberKnife, after their teenage granddaughter had to travel to India to access the treatment when she was in the late stages of a rare bone cancer.

After writing to the Health Minister about the treatment, Mr Tudge was advised that an application in relation to the technology is currently before the Medical Services Advisory Committee. Approval by the committee is needed for the oncology service to be claimable under Medicare.

"It is clearly not an experimental treatment but one that is widespread elsewhere," Mr Tudge said. "It is time we had it here." •

Roo industry needs a bounce

GREATER effort is needed to develop export markets for kangaroo meat, according to the Member for Maranoa (Qld) Bruce Scott.

Mr Scott told the House of Representatives particular effort should be directed to re-establishing the valuable market in Russia and pursuing a potentially lucrative market in China.

The kangaroo (or macropod) industry provides employment opportunities in many regional communities, both in the harvesting and processing sectors.

"In some of these communities 30 to 40 per cent of the jobs are related to the harvesting of the macropods in that area," Mr Scott said.

With record rainfalls over three consecutive years leading to a massive increase in kangaroo numbers, and a consequential increase in the kangaroo harvest quota, Mr Scott is concerned

there are not enough markets for kangaroo meat, which will ultimately lead to the meat being sold as pet food.

"That is a tragedy because kangaroo meat is better than a pet food industry product," he said. "It is much better and has a place in the human consumption chain."

Mr Scott said he did not want to see a situation where funding was simply provided to cull kangaroos, because kangaroo meat could be a valuable food export product for Australia if markets were developed. •