



R O Y A L
Z o o l o g i c a l
S O C I E T Y
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The Senate References Committee Inquiry into Biosecurity and Quarantine Arrangements

Submission on behalf of Zoos South Australia

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a paper to the Senate Inquiry into Biosecurity and Quarantine Arrangements.

Introduction

Zoos South Australia is one of the leading zoo organisations in Australia running three properties, Adelaide Zoo, Monarto Zoo and Warrawong Sanctuary. We have over 27000 members and visitation of 600 000 per year. This paper address the issues identified in the Terms of Reference. We also refer the Committee to the submissions made by the Australian Wildlife Health Network (AWHN), the Wildlife Diseases Association-Australasia (WDA-A), the Australian Registry of Wildlife Health (ARWH) and Zoos Victoria and the Zoo and Aquarium Association. We endorse the comments made by these organisations.

The Value of Zoos and Aquariums

Zoos in Australia play a key role in national conservation with a focus on preservation of biodiversity and environmental education. Currently zoos and aquariums meet 4 out of 5 of ex situ criteria and 4 of 13 of in situ criteria as part Australia's signatory commitment to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The sector also plays an important part in Australian society as the second most popular cultural activity (after cinema) with over 15 million visitors a year.

Submission

1. Zoos South Australia supports and encourages the full implementation of the recommendations contained within the Beale Review. In particular, the Association and its member zoos endorse the co-management and co-regulatory approach recommended by Beale¹, with industry taking responsibility to establish and meet minimum biosecurity standards. The Australian zoo industry is actively participating in the preparation and implementation of zoo industry biosecurity guidelines (the National Zoo Biosecurity Manual), with help from Zoos SA staff and assisted by DAFF.

¹ Beale Review recommendation 28.



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As part of a co-management approach, Zoos South Australia believes a national quality assurance body should be established to fulfil the Beale Review recommendations and to carry out biosecurity and quarantine audits of zoos and aquariums. The national body would also be able to audit the national animal welfare standards established through the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy². This would be the most efficient and effective mechanism for governments and business.

- Zoos South Australia is an important conservation partner in the global conservation effort; we contribute significantly to South Australian society and we are a key tourist attractions³. To maintain a viable sector there is a need to import new stock to establish or genetically supplement species breeding programs within Australia. We believe the current regulations and processes associated with importation of zoo animals are cumbersome, inefficient and at times crippling slow. We believe these processes could be streamlined, to the benefit of all. The current importation assessment processes (IRA, Live Animal Import List and Vertebrate Pest Committee listing for importation) are complex and time-consuming, with considerable duplication and inefficiency in the assessment processes. Import health assessments through the Import Risk Analysis process (Biosecurity Australia) have been extensively delayed due to lack of prioritisation within DAFF.

The Beale⁴ and Hawke⁵ Reviews both make recommendations for the streamlining these process and the development of a national system.

- Australia's draft Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010-2020 vision statement is for our 'biodiversity to be healthy, resilient to climate change and valued for its essential contribution to our existence'. The nation currently lacks a well-developed, well-resourced strategy for monitoring and responding to wildlife health or disease concerns and is therefore at risk of not being able to fulfil the vision of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy or contain emerging risks to public health and the economy.

Zoos South Australia is concerned with Australia's lack of adequate diagnostic capabilities to test for significant wildlife and exotic diseases and believes this shortcoming needs to be addressed, as recommended in the Beale Review⁶.

² AAWS stated objective: Enhanced national approach and commitment to ensure high standards of animal welfare.

³ Socio-economic Value of Zoos and Aquariums Report, Mar 09, Aegis Consulting & Applied Economics.

⁴ Beale Review recommendation 16

⁵ Hawke Review recommendation 1.

⁶ Beale Review recommendation 58



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Zoos and Aquaria including Zoos South Australia facilities offer an unrivalled wildlife surveillance resource, of benefit to the nation's biosecurity. Australia's principal zoos treat over 14,000 cases pa of sick or injured free-ranging wildlife through their wildlife hospitals. Zoos and Aquariums also have the necessary leading veterinary services to support surveillance requirements. The Association believes that key zoos and aquaria should be formally integrated in to a national biosecurity surveillance network.

We also emphasises the need for an analysis capability through organisations such as the Australian Wildlife Health Network to produce 'intelligence' for decision-makers rather than just providing raw information.

In summary, to progress Australia's commitment to Biosecurity and Quarantine arrangements, Zoos South Australia recommends the following:

- The Beale Review recommendations are implemented in full.
- A national quality assurance body for the zoo and aquarium sector to be established for a co regulatory approach to biosecurity and Australian Animal Welfare Standards.
- That the process for import risk assessments (DAFF), live import list (DEWHA), and the Vertebrate Pest Committee listing (NRM committee & MCPI) be streamlined in to a single process and a national approach adopted for vertebrate pest risk assessment.
- Australia develops diagnostic capabilities to test for significant wildlife and exotic diseases to Australia's economy, public health and biodiversity
- Provide the necessary resourcing to the Australian Wildlife Health Network to provide the strategy and practice of wildlife disease surveillance, investigation, intelligence production, and response.
- That the Government incorporates Australian zoos into the National biosecurity surveillance program.

Zoos South Australia along with the Zoo and Aquarium Association and its members have a genuine interest in national biosecurity issues particularly in the protection of the environment and for ensuring a viable zoo and aquarium sector. Zoos South Australia would welcome the opportunity to meet with members of the Senate Reference Committee or their representatives to assist with the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Wayne Boardman
Head of Veterinary Conservation Programs on behalf of Zoos South Australia



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