



12 May 2017

Dr Jane Thomson
Committee Secretary
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Thomson

Re: Inquiry into the biosecurity risks associated with the importation of seafood and seafood products (including uncooked prawns and uncooked prawn meat) into Australia

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a supplementary submission in addition to the one the NT Seafood Council provided on 13 April 2017. Since that submission, the findings have been finalised for an independent research project by the Charles Sturt University into the biosecurity risks posed by imported *Laters calcarifer*.

Considering the NT is home to Humpty Doo Barramundi, one of the largest producers of saltwater Barramundi in Australia and an NT Seafood Council member, we would like to incorporate the findings of the report, *An assessment of the risk of exotic disease introduction and spread among Barramundi farms from the importation of Barramundi products* (FRDC Project No 2015-040) into our submission.

As demonstrated by the recent failures of border control and the spread of White Spot Disease (WSD) into Queensland, biosecurity breaches impact more than farm production – they can also jeopardise wild harvest fisheries, recreational fishing, Indigenous people's cultural practices and food security, food service and tourism sectors, the consumer's ability to source Australian seafood, as well as more broad-ranging and unpredictable negative impacts on the marine environment, ecology and biodiversity.

In light of the WSD incursion in Queensland, and the delays in response and containment, the NT Seafood Council believes it is critical that lessons be learnt from that biosecurity breach and that the findings of the Charles Sturt University be carefully heeded by this inquiry.

As such, the NT Seafood Council supports the recommendations of the Australian Barramundi Farmers Association for the immediate adoption of:

- Implementation of measures that prohibit importing into Australia of all uncooked barramundi, particularly any product that is subject to further processing, i.e. skinning, filleting etc. This is critical as there is no bacterial or viral diseases kill step on the importation process, and many diseases survive chilling and freezing, particularly short term, so they remain viable (e.g. vectors has been recovered from prawns frozen to -70°C).

- Enhanced general pre-border biosecurity controls be put in place on all uncooked seafood coming into Australia from countries not proven to be disease free that could introduce exotic pests or diseases.
- Ensuring that all seafood Import Risk Assessments (IRA) are precautionary in nature, up to date and reviewed regularly. The current IRA is almost 20 year old is outdated, inadequate and new diseases will have emerged since then. It must be noted that as new diseases emerge there may well be no reliable tests and if the at risk product is allowed to enter there is a likelihood they could have spread widely before being identified. Restricting access to higher risk product can alleviate this issue.
- The need to be able to track entry of at risk species by ensuring that the international Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (referred to as the 'Harmonized System' or 'HS') is extended to 8 digits to ensure that key seafood species, such as barramundi, are adequately reported against, for risk analysis and tracking purposes. This should include information as to country of origin and the form of the product (i.e. whole, skin on, fillet, fresh, frozen etc).

The NT Seafood Council would also like to draw attention to the Australian Government White Paper concerning Northern Australian development, *Our North, Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* and the ongoing work towards a National Aquaculture Strategy. Both of these reference the vast, untapped opportunities in northern Australia and potential for increased investment in aquaculture.

They recognise the benefits of increasing aquaculture production across northern Australia not just for local industry but also to help meet global food needs in the future.

There is potential for billions of dollars of aquaculture development in this region, not just for Barramundi but for aquaculture more broadly. The opportunities have been identified but once exotic diseases have been introduced and allowed to spread there will be billions of dollars of lost opportunities.

It is critical that these biosecurity risks are swiftly addressed if our region, and the Australian economy, is to reach its full potential.

Yours faithfully

Daniel Kimberley
Chairman