

Senate Inquiry into Biosecurity & Quarantine Arrangements- Submission by John Landos

This submission specifically relates to the level of assistance provided to consultants such as myself by the Biosecurity Group of DAFF.

I retired in 1996 having been a former SES Officer with AQIS from 1981 to 1996 including a period as Head of Australia's Animal and Plant Quarantine Service from 1990-94.

Since 1996 I have been actively consulting in the WTO Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement / biosecurity / quarantine / institutional food safety arrangements. On a number of occasions I have been contracted directly on behalf of AQIS, the most significant of which was the managing of a team to review aircraft waste disposal arrangements in 1998. I have undertaken in excess of 100 assignments many related to the immediate Asia / Pacific region, and often related to strengthening biosecurity / quarantine arrangements in that region.

Over my 14 years of consulting I have had a few occasions when I have sought assistance from AQIS / Biosecurity Officers, and invariably, until a few months ago received a helpful response. With this recent exception it has now been around 5 years since I have needed to seek assistance from AQIS / Biosecurity. I have always been careful in terms of the time I ask of officers, as I am acutely conscious of the pressure and time restraints that many have.

In the recent example referred to above I sought the assistance via email of the PR people to provide me with maybe a dozen low-resolution electronic photos of AQIS Officers at work that I could incorporate into a quarantine training package I was developing. I received a response from Corporate Communications as follows: "Our understanding is that AQIS is not involved in the training therefore we are unable to provide any photos for your presentation"

I thought given the nature of the enquiry this was an inappropriate response. My reasoning is that for biosecurity / quarantine to be effective in any country requires a partnership between the agency responsible, stakeholders, the travelling public and indeed the wider community. People like myself who consult in the biosecurity field extensively, and in my case in our immediate region of Asia and the Pacific, contribute to the strengthening of biosecurity services in the countries visited. By doing so we are effectively contributing to strengthening Australia's biosecurity arrangements. I consider myself an active partner in that respect.

My expectation is that the Biosecurity Group in conjunction with Corporate Communications would give due recognition of the partnership between consultants and their agencies and that this would lead to a more positive response in future. This takes into consideration not only the inherent value to Australia's biosecurity arrangements, but also the value of projects in countries that represent a high strategic priority to the Australian Government.

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