

INQUIRY INTO THE NORTHERN AUSTRALIA INFRASTRUCTURE FACILITY BILL 2016

Answer to Question on Notice from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

Question asked by the Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia on Friday, 8 April 2016.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: On the issue of the biosecurity that we were discussing with your colleagues, do either of you—and hello both of you—want to make any comment on that?

Mr Slatyer: It is not within the remit of our responsibility in the water division, but my colleague may be able to pass something on; otherwise, we will take any question on notice and make sure you get a quick response.

Mr McLoughlin: Senator, as you know from my background knowing something about seafood, I think the project Sea Dragon comments about broader public access to that facility are probably right when it comes to biosecurity; but, in terms of specific questions around biosecurity, we would have to take that on notice for the more expert people in our department to deal with.

ANSWER:

I understand the question relates to the comments that Seafarms Group Ltd made in their submission with respect to the capacity of a project to serve multiple users whilst not compromising other requirements such as biosecurity.

There is a farm biosecurity website where the principles apply irrespective of the type of farm. Some of the text from that website (www.farmbiosecurity.com.au) is below which hopefully provides some context for you:

“Farm inputs

Almost anything moved onto your property can be a potential source of pests and diseases for livestock and plants. To reduce the biosecurity risks to your property monitor animals or plant materials that enter the property, including sources of water, feed and fertiliser.

People, vehicles & equipment

If it can move, it can carry diseases, pests and weeds. For this reason, people, vehicles and equipment pose a high biosecurity risk and should be managed accordingly.”

With respect to aquaculture specifically:

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources with the assistance of State and Territory governments and the aquaculture industry is in the process of developing guidelines for an aquaculture farm biosecurity plan. It is still in draft but includes a section on biosecurity protocols to address major transmission routes for disease. An extract from the draft is below.

Effective property management is necessary to manage routes of disease transmission so that effective controls can be established. For example, perimeter fencing, designated entry and exit points, and signage can be used to direct visitors and contractors to control points (e.g. reception) where biosecurity risks can be assessed (e.g. assessing the risk presented by visitors) and any measures applied (e.g. disinfection of equipment).