

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2015

Agriculture

Question: 6

Division/Agency: Agricultural Policy Division

Topic: Hepatitis A outbreak

Proof Hansard page: 11 (23.02.2015)

Senator CAMERON asked:

Senator CAMERON: Have you provided any of that advice over the period of this problem with the hepatitis A outbreak?

Dr Grimes: I personally have not provided advice, but of course the department provides advice. I would have to check with the relevant officers what advices might have been provided in the last few days. But the minister is very well informed on these matters.

Answer:

The department provided advice on 18 and 22 February 2015.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2015

Agriculture

Question: 7

Division/Agency: Agricultural Policy Division

Topic: Foreign Investment Review Board

Proof Hansard page: 136-137 (23.02.2015)

Senator BACK asked:

Senator BACK: If the land, now being agricultural, was purchased by a foreign entity, not for the purposes of agriculture but for the purposes of mining, would it be captured under the agricultural provisions?

Ms Freeman: I might have to take that on notice, unless Ms Jones can answer that. I would have to take it on notice.

Ms Jones: No, I cannot. There are a number of details to be worked through that I think the Treasury portfolio would be best placed to answer.

Answer:

Under Australia's Foreign Investment Policy (2015) agricultural land is currently defined with reference to rural land, which is land used wholly and exclusively for carrying on a business of primary production. According to the Policy "foreign persons must seek prior approval for a proposed acquisition of an interest in rural land where the cumulative value of rural land that the foreign person (and any associates) already holds exceeds, or immediately following the proposed acquisition is likely to exceed, \$15 million".

The foreign investment rules, including in relation to agricultural land, relate to the current use of the land, not prospective land use (e.g. mining). Therefore, irrespective of the intended use of the agricultural land, it would be subject to screening if captured by the \$15 million threshold.

Furthermore, all foreign government investors must notify the Government and get prior approval to acquire an interest in land (including an interest in rural land), regardless of the value of the investment.

The Australian Government's Options Paper Strengthening the Foreign Investment Framework, which was released on 25 February 2015, seeks feedback on the definition of agricultural land that will ultimately lead to a legislative definition of agricultural land. Submissions to the consultation paper close on Friday 20 March 2015.