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Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation

Committee

Budget estimates 2012–2013

DAFF

Tabled document no: 2By: *Senator McKenzie*Date: *21* May 2012**The Northern Star**

Rising fees hurt small exporters

Rebecca Lollback | 17th April 2012 5:06 AM

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"UNBELIEVABLE" fee hikes are forcing small exporters out of business, the owners of a Northern Rivers nursery have told Federal Nationals leader Warren Truss.

Mr Truss spent yesterday afternoon at Ellison Horticultural at Rous, near Alstonville.

Owners David and Rhonda LeBrocque told him some of their costs for exporting registrations and certificates (required by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) had increased by 800% over the past 12 months.

They also said that legislation changes had shown "little to no regard for small exporters".

"The changes of course are weighted heavily towards the multinational grain, beef and citrus exporters," Mrs LeBrocque said.

"Our nursery industry association has been lobbying on behalf of the small exporter for the past two years ... but all efforts have fallen on deaf ears.

"Something needs to be done urgently to help small exporters remain competitive on the world stage, or we face extinction."

Mr Truss said his understanding was that the Federal Government was working towards a "cost recovery" model with regards to the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service.

"When we were in government there was a 40% subsidy ... now that no longer exists," he said.



Federal Nationals leader Warren Truss, Parkes MP Mark Coulton, Victorian senator Bridget McKenzie, Ellison Horticultural owners David and Rhonda LeBrocque and Flynn MP Ken O'Dowd discuss problems for small business exporters at LeBrocque's nursery at Rous.

Rebecca Lollt

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"The government had promised there would be trade-offs for everyone, but in reality a lot of those promises have not been realised.

"When you've been paying \$100 or \$500 for registration and then it suddenly costs \$5000, there's a huge impact on a small business. Most other countries provide these services for free."

A spokesperson for DAFF confirmed that AQIS export certification services were "cost recovered according to the Australian Government's Cost Recovery Guidelines".

"There are anomalies caused by the current classification of nursery products," the spokesperson said.

"For example, seeds are managed from the Grains Export Program and nursery stock under the horticulture program.

"The Department aims to resolve these anomalies with new fees and charges."

Mr Truss was travelling with other Nationals politicians, including Victorian senator Bridget McKenzie, Parkes MP Mark Coulton, Mallee MP John Forrest and Flynn MP Ken O'Dowd.

They spent the morning in Tweed Heads and were heading to Grafton last night.

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