

Good morning all

You will recall I travelled to Sydney last week to meet with DAFF officials and their advisor. Our meeting was relaxed and cordial and discussions were as follows.

We introduced ourselves so we understood our respective positions.

I outlined the content of my report and suggested the points of difference were the DAFF matrix and not the balance of the report. We therefore agreed to not discuss the rest of my report.

I emphasised my view the matrix was “opaque” for stakeholders outside DAFF who would find difficulties understanding how probabilities and consequences were combined. We discussed (1) the need for some alternative risk analysis technique that was transparent and (2) documentation and publication of the import risk analysis process.

While the options outlined in my report were discussed it is fair to say the officials wanted to consider other options. The use of Bayes Nets was discussed as one such option but I suggested this might be difficult for lay people to understand. We also discussed some areas where research might usefully show how stakeholders would respond to alternative import risk analysis techniques.

I drew the DAFF officials attention to the “Methodology” and “Decision Paths” published by the NZ Environmental Protection Authority on its website <http://www.epa.govt.nz/>. These set out how EPA processes applications for consents, including risk assessment techniques it may use. I have attached copies to illustrate the principle of open publication. The DAFF officials responded that such an approach is under active consideration as part of revision of biosecurity legislation.

The DAFF officials emphasised their belief they are on the “cutting edge” of import risk analyses and hoped the Senators might seek some comparison of their work with their counterparts in, for example, New Zealand, the USA, UK and Europe. Their commitment to the biosecurity of Australia was very evident.

At the end of the meeting I suggested the need for some actions to be agreed. The DAFF officials agreed:

1. DAFF will consider alternative options to better represent the import risk analysis process and outcomes.
2. The import risk analysis process and techniques used will be documented and published on the DAFF website so stakeholders can download, read and better understand the process.

These are my words and DAFF may couch the actions in different words: I hope they will be somewhat similar to mine.

Chris Peace