



Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture,
Water and the Environment**

Senator Susan McDonald
Chair
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator McDonald

Having reviewed the transcripts of Additional Estimates hearings conducted by the Senator Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee on 3 March 2020, the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment would like to identify four factual mistakes made in providing evidence to the Committee.

1. During the hearing Senator the Hon. Malcolm Roberts pursued a line of questioning about the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership (IA-CEPA).

In response to this line of questioning Senator Ruston, said:

"..... the Indonesian parliament ratified the IA-CEPA-the FTA agreement between Australia and Indonesia-on 6 February this year."

The Department wishes to correct this answer. While on 6 February the Indonesian Parliament passed the necessary IA-CEPA legislation, there are still other minor internal processes Indonesia needs to complete before it can notify Australia that it has finalised its domestic ratification processes. The agreement will come into force 60 days after Indonesia formally advises Australia it has ratified the agreement.

2. During the hearing Senator Rice asked in relation to an Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) report, *The effects of drought and climate variability in Australian farms*:

"With the ABARES report, that's the existing cost at just over one degree. Is there any work being done to extend those forecasts?"

In response Mr Thompson, Deputy Secretary, said:

"As the secretary said, A BARES is due to appear on Friday, but, in terms of the work that ABARES prepared and released last December, they were estimates comparing the last 20 years with the previous 20 years. It wasn't a projection."

The Department wishes to correct this answer. In terms of the work that ABARES prepared and released last December, the estimates of farm performance compared the climate of the last 20 years with the previous 50 years.

3. During the hearing Senator Canavan asked in relation to whether a payment had been made to a seafarer on the *Awassi*:

"...was a payment made to a seafarer on the Awassi?"

In response Ms Lane, First Assistant Secretary, Compliance Division said:

"I'm happy to take that on notice, although we would not typically not provide detail on exactly the types of information we collect during the course of an investigation."

The Department wishes to correct this answer:

"I'm happy to take that on notice, although we would not typically provide detail on exactly the types of information we collect during the course of an investigation."

4. During the hearing, Senator Rice asked in relation to the Biosecurity Futures group:

"Has this Biosecurity Futures Group been established instead of the industry and community biosecurity committee that was recommended in the 2017 biosecurity review and endorsed by the government in November 2018?"

In response Ms Geiger, Assistant Secretary, Biosecurity Policy Implementation Division, said:

"This group does respond to that recommendation"

The Department wishes to correct this answer. The Biosecurity Futures group does not respond to that recommendation.

The Biosecurity Futures group was formed following recommendation 7 of the Biosecurity Imports Levy Industry Steering Committee report released 11 December, 2019 (also informally known as the Trebeck report) which called for:

'A high-level, expertise-based Biosecurity Advisory Council should be appointed to enhance the shared responsibility principle of biosecurity, provide more scope for private sector interests to contribute constructively to important biosecurity decisions, including funding and consideration of relative biosecurity risk, and ensure that levy proceeds are appropriated for additional biosecurity activities'.

The Biosecurity Futures group had an introductory meeting on 23 December, 2019.

The review Senator Rice refers to is Priorities for Australia's Biosecurity System - An Independent Review of the Capacity of the National Biosecurity System and its Underpinning Intergovernmental Agreement and was released in July 2017. The Industry and Community Reference forum that responds to this review provides information directly to the National Biosecurity Committee (NBC). The jurisdiction hosting NBC is responsible for organising the forum to engage with industry and community stakeholders.

Queensland hosted the last Industry and Community Reference forum on 19 March, 2019. The forum was chaired by Dr Allison Crook (General Manager Animal Biosecurity and Welfare and Chief Veterinary Officer at Queensland Government). Subsequent hosts of NBC have been unable to hold a forum due to bushfires.

I apologise for the errors in the answers outlined above and trust this further information will be of assistance to the Committee. The remainder of the answers to questions given at the Hearing, are correct.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the transcript of the Additional Estimates.

Yours sincerely

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