



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 the Budget Estimates hearings conducted by the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee on 31 March and 5 April 2022, the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment would like to provide two factual corrections to the Committee.

Correction 1.

During the hearing on 31 March 2022, Senator Ciccone said in relation to workers from the Pacific:

"We heard the figure that you mentioned earlier about the 52,000 people who are ready. How quickly can we get those 52,000 people in the country? What is stopping the government from bringing those 52,000 people in the Pacific here into our farming sector?"

In response Ms Deininger and Ms Stanion said:

"Ms Deininger: With the Pacific scheme, naturally enough, there is a process to go through. It is important—I think we've also talked about this before—for employers to market test the jobs. Jobs have to be market tested with Australians before the employer can seek to utilise the Pacific scheme. There is a process of understanding the demand by the employer and then connecting them to available workers. So there is, naturally enough, a process. I think it is fair to say that we have a very regular stream of arrivals from a range of countries in our Pacific to meet the demands of employers.

Ms Stanion: I might add, Senator, that since we were here in mid-February, 1,448 workers have arrived from the Pacific.

Senator CICCONE: How many?

Ms Stanion: It is 1,448 on 66 flights. As Ms Deininger said, there is a regular stream of workers coming in as those recruitment plans are done by employers."

I wish to correct this answer:

"On 1 April 2022, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the agency responsible for the Pacific labour mobility programs, reviewed their data and provided the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment with more accurate figures.

1,694 workers under the Seasonal Worker Program and the Pacific Labour Scheme arrived in Australia on 55 flights since 16 February 2022."

Correction 2.

During the hearing on 5 April 2022, Dr Schipp provided the following responses to Senator McCarthy in relation to lumpy skin disease:

“Senator McCARTHY: What would be the next steps for our country to be able to produce the vaccine? You spoke a bit about the Geelong lab. What would need to happen?”

Dr Schipp: As I said earlier, the laboratory at Geelong was built to handle this virus and other viruses. But it was excluded at the time of commissioning that laboratory. So I would be keen to explore the opportunity or the need to bring that vaccine into the laboratory and reverse the earlier decision so that we can work with that virus safely in the high-security laboratory at Geelong.

Senator McCARTHY: Why was it excluded?

Dr Schipp: At the time of commissioning the laboratory back in the eighties, foot and mouth disease and lumpy skin disease were the two viruses that were excluded from the initial approval, given the concerns of the livestock industry that there may be an escape from the high-security laboratory. In the 40 years of operation of that laboratory, there has been no escape causing disease and, therefore, I think we now have sufficient evidence to address that concern.”

I wish to correct this answer:

“Lumpy skin disease was not excluded at the time of commissioning but in a separate decision more than twenty years ago.”

I apologise for the error 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.

Yours sincerely

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