



The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP

**Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources
Leader of The Nationals
Federal Member for New England**

Ref:

Mr Rob McCormack

13 OCT 2016

Dear Mr McCormack

Thank you for your correspondence of 5 September 2016 and 1 October 2016 regarding the possible sale of Mexican crayfish in Australia. The government takes any breach of Australia's biosecurity system seriously and works with industry and the public to safeguard Australia from the introduction of new pests and diseases.

I understand that officers from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources have contacted you in relation to this matter. The investigation has concluded with my department unable to find any evidence to substantiate a breach of portfolio legislation, including the *Biosecurity Act 2015*. I am advised that limited testing has not provided evidence of infection with 'crayfish plague' (*Aphanomyces astaci*).

The jurisdiction of the *Biosecurity Act 2015* applies to goods (which includes animals) that have been imported into Australia. While the Act prohibits receiving or possessing prohibited goods, the legislation does not provide an offence if the goods are the progeny of those legally brought into Australia. Information obtained during the investigation indicates that Mexican crayfish sold through numerous online sites and social media were bred from an established population in Australia.

During the course of the investigation, inquiries were conducted with a number of state authorities who advised that these crayfish were not listed as 'Noxious Aquatic Species' (in Victoria) or its equivalent in other states.

I have asked my department to refer this issue for consideration by the committees on Aquatic Animal Health and Invasive Plants and Animals. These national committees include membership from State and Territory Governments and the Commonwealth.

Ongoing issues regarding the sale of the established Mexican crayfish population should still be referred to the relevant state bodies for consideration. The department values the contribution made by industry and the public in providing information that identifies potential non-compliance with biosecurity laws and requirements.

Any information that attributes Mexican crayfish to an illegal importation should be provided to the departments 'Redline' service on the following number 1800 900 090.

Thank you again for bringing your concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely

Barnaby Joyce MP