

Answers to questions on notice from hearing on 11 November 2014

Received from Natural Resources Commission NSW

From Hansard of 11 November 2014, Sydney.

Senator Waters: So the state level funding does not give you two bites.

Mr Wilde: The state level funding did not allow the multiple bites of the cherry, if you like, and the state was not able to access funding from NEBRA for tropical soda apple, for what reasons I am not aware; I am sorry.

Senator Waters: Perhaps we might get some further thoughts from you on that on notice, if you have any further to add.

Answer: The Committee requested during the hearing that the NRC provide some additional information in regards to the current systems in place to respond to new incursions. Please find below some additional thoughts on this matter.

In NSW there is a small new incursions fund that is a component of the Weeds Action Program which allows for a limited response to new incursions. \$30,000 was made available from this fund to address the Tropical Soda Apple incursion in NSW. Funding was also provided by local control authorities and the former catchment management authorities. The NRC's report on weed management in NSW identified some limitations of this response funding, including that a local control authority or regional organisation can typically only apply for incursion funding for one year.

The NRC recommended that the NSW Government establish a reserve fund, similar to the pest insect destruction fund, to enable timely access to adequate resources to respond to high-risk new weed incursions.

There is not a lot of information publicly available about the decision-making processes under the National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement (NEBRA). However, stakeholders report that the necessary rapid responses to contain spread of new incursions are hindered by funding not being readily available, the need for consensus, and the high level of certainty required about the extent of the incursion and feasibility of eradication before acting. The NRC supports the suggestion of the Office of Environment and Heritage in its submission that the effectiveness of NEBRA should be assessed.

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