

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 376
Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates
Outcome: Agency
Programme: Director of National Parks
Topic: CHRISTMAS ISLAND BIOLOGICAL CONTROL - WASP
Hansard Page: N/A
Question Date: 29 October 2014
Question Type: Written

Senator Singh asked:

Has the Department been able to import and implement the biological control option – a wasp – it was investigating with La Trobe University?

- a. If not, why not, and where is the approval process up to?
- b. The report on the impact of the wasp was due in June this year. Has the Department received it?
- c. What were its findings?
- d. Has the Department identified any risks or impacts that may occur from implementation of the biological control?

Answer:

The Director of National Parks has been involved in an extensive research project on the possibility and viability of introducing a biological control agent to control yellow crazy ants.

- a) The Director of National Parks has discussed the outcomes of the research with the Christmas Island community and the feedback has been positive, with locals keen to pursue biological control as a way of controlling yellow crazy ants. These consultations explained the next steps in the process and addressed any questions local people had about the control options. An application to the Department of Agriculture to import a biological control agent was submitted on 28 November 2014
- b) Yes.
- c) As an alternative to chemical control, the Director of National Parks contracted La Trobe University in 2008 to investigate the feasibility of indirect biological control of crazy ants via biological control of the introduced yellow lac scale on which establishment of crazy ant supercolonies depends. The outcomes of the research program supported both the concept of indirect biological control and the safe introduction of a host-specific control agent in the form of a parasitic micro-wasp which was identified in Malaysia within the natural range of the scale.
- d) Host-specificity testing conducted in Malaysia by La Trobe University has confirmed that the proposed control agent is target-specific and that there are no known potential non-target species that would be impacted on Christmas Island.