

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2014

Agriculture

Question: 75

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Policy Division

Topic: Timeline for biosecurity legislation

Proof Hansard page: 28

Senator SIEWERT asked:

Senator SIEWERT: Maybe I could ask the parliamentary secretary what the government's time line is for biosecurity legislation.

Senator Colbeck: We do not have a time line at this point in time. As Ms Mellor said, the department is briefing us on the legislation. In fact I think I had a briefing last week or the week before. We are looking at a lot of the issues that were raised during the inquiry. We are taking notice of the evidence that was received from the inquiry and looking at how that might work in the context of the legislation, and then it will work into the legislative flow of the government. It needs to find a slot within the legislative program. They will be part of the process when it comes up as well.

Senator SIEWERT: Are we looking at within the next 12 months or further out?

Senator Colbeck: I am sorry, I do not have the detail on that at this point in time. I could take that on notice for you.

Answer:

Due to the dissolution of the Australian Parliament for the September 2013 election, both biosecurity bills lapsed. A decision on the nature and timing of new biosecurity legislation is a matter for the government to consider.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2014

Agriculture

Question: 76

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Policy Division

Topic: Biosecurity Bill and the Inspector General position

Proof Hansard page: 62

Senator FARRELL asked:

Senator FARRELL: The parliamentary secretary is here so he must have been involved in the discussions. Can you tell us precisely where the legislation is to establish this position?

Senator Colbeck: As we discussed this morning, the government is reconsidering the bill. There were some criticisms of the bill as part of the committee process that this committee undertook prior to the election. We are taking that on board. We are reconsidering that. Then we will bring the bill back as part of our legislative program, which is exactly what I said this morning.

Senator FARRELL: Is it your intention to come forward with legislation in this area? Is that your intention?

Senator Colbeck: We are reconsidering the biosecurity bill at the moment and we are taking into account evidence that was given to this committee in its incomplete inquiry before the election. I cannot give you a time frame on it because I do not have one. That is an active consideration by the government at the moment. As Senator Sterle has just indicated—and I am happy to agree with him—it is an important piece of legislation.

Senator FARRELL: So it is the intention of the government to come forward with a piece of legislation covering this area? Am I clear on that?

Senator Colbeck: Biosecurity, yes.

Senator FARRELL: And the creation of an inspector general position?

Senator Colbeck: The detail of that question I cannot answer yet. I will have to take that on notice.

Answer:

Due to the dissolution of the Australian Parliament for the September 2013 election, both biosecurity bills lapsed. A decision on whether to create the statutory position of Inspector-General of Biosecurity as part of the biosecurity legislation is a matter for the government to consider.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2014

Agriculture

Question: 77

Division: Biosecurity Policy Division

Topic: Key area activities

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

1. Can you update the committee on work undertaken by the Department in the three key areas identified by the then Opposition:
 - a. Establishing a Biosecurity Flying Squad as a first response unit for urgent biosecurity issues
 - b. Strengthening biosecurity and quarantine containment
 - c. Focussing on import risk analysis and quarantine arrangements that better integrate science in quarantine decisions and minimise the risk of exotic pest and disease incursions.
2. Has the government provided the addition 20 million dollars and is so how has this money been distributed.

Answer:

1. The three areas identified in relation to the commitment to strengthen biosecurity and quarantine are subject to the development of advice to the government for the 2014-15 budget.
2. This is a matter that is being considered by the government in the context of the 2014-15 budget.

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Question: 78

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Policy Division

Topic: Biosecurity legislation

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

On the Department of Agriculture Website under Biosecurity Legislation it states that there is work being undertaken to the developing new biosecurity legislation to replace the existing Quarantine Act 1908. Is this building on the work undertaken by the Labor Government with the Biosecurity Bill 2012 and the Inspector General of Biosecurity Bill 2012 (Both were introduced into the Parliament on 28 November 2012 and referred to the RART Committee on 29/11/2012 and the report was due by 27/11/2013, but the Parliament was dissolved and there the Bills lapsed

Answer:

Due to the dissolution of the Australian Parliament for the September 2013 election, both biosecurity bills lapsed. The department is providing advice to the government on the development of new biosecurity legislation. A decision on how to proceed with the legislation is a matter for the government to consider.