

Livestock Act, Property Identification Code & Biosecurity fee

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 6.7. The last dot point under Agriculture, Food and Fisheries Targets for 2010-11 notes a review of the Livestock Act 1997. Can the minister inform us what aspects of the act will be reviewed and why?

The Hon. M.F. O'BRIEN: In essence, the proposed changes to the act are:

- Use of expiation fees in the penalty provisions for a number of less serious, clear-cut offences: failing to register as an owner of livestock, breach of a ministerial notice that does not involve an exotic disease and certain breaches of an individual order.
- Certain definitions including the definition of a notifiable disease to include diseases that must be reported but certain provisions of the Act in relation to notifiable diseases will not apply. This will provide for complying with international reporting requirements for export purposes while allowing for more flexible disease management practices.
- There will be an amendment to Part five—Exotic Diseases Eradication Fund provisions to better fit the provisions of the national Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (otherwise known as the Cost Sharing Agreement); in particular to provide for 'salvage slaughter' which will take into account payments received following sale to an abattoir when determining compensation payments.
- Making it a requirement that water must be made available to bees so as to maximize mixing of bees from different apiaries, hence minimising spread of disease.
- Including police officers as inspectors under the act, limited to declared emergency animal disease events, particularly in relation to stock movements so that immediate action can be taken in restricting the movement of livestock during an emergency animal disease event.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 6, page 74, Biosecurity animal health—efficiencies and cost recovery measures from livestock owners who benefit from existing animal health surveillance programs. My initial question is: has the government consulted over this plan with all livestock owners; for example, both owners of commercial livestock and also smaller landowners who may have non-commercial livestock including horses?

The Hon. M.F. O'BRIEN: There are groups set up to discuss the way in which we are going to implement this particular arrangement. The decision was made that it should be embracive; that it should not just apply to what I would term serious livestock producers but also to hobbyists and owners of individual animals just to give us the coverage and the surety that, in the event of an outbreak, we have a structure in place which would allow us to identify the property within the overall structure. I have been advised that those discussions are well and truly underway.

Departmental Adviser:

Mr W. Zacharin, Executive Director, Biosecurity SA.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 6.7, the last dot point concerning agriculture, food and fisheries targets, and refer to biosecurity fees and, I believe, property identification code fees. When the government sets these fees, will the government take into account the varying levels of benefit of animal health surveillance programs provided to livestock owners, including commercial properties and non-commercial properties, to ensure that the costs are shared fairly among them according to the benefit received?

The Hon. M.F. O'BRIEN: I have called Will Zacharin, and I think probably he might like to also elaborate on your previous question on the review of the Livestock Act also.

Mr ZACHARIN: We have commenced consultation with the livestock peak industry bodies in relation to the mandatory property identification code system. We already have 17,000 PICs issued: it is just that it is not currently mandatory. So the change in the arrangement is to make it mandatory and to charge a fee. We have advised the livestock groups that that fee is likely to be around \$76 for a two-year period for the PIC registration, and that is separate to the cost recovery arrangements for animal health, which would be an additional fee to property owners, and we are still in the process of

consulting with livestock industry groups about whether that is a flat fee or whether it is based on the different industry sectors that people are engaged in.

Mr PEDERICK: So, the answer is that there may be a variance between commercial and non-commercial properties. Is that what you are saying?

The Hon. M.F. O'BRIEN: That is right. We have had a discussion on this to ensure not only an equitable outcome but also an outcome that does not impose upon the commercial sector, if you like, a burden of supporting those who are hobbyists or those people who have effectively one or two pets. In essence, all land owners with livestock and horses will make a contribution to the state Animal Health Program. Mechanisms for charging a fee or levy will be developed with industry through a consultative process, and Mr Zacharin has just referred to that. A cost benefit analysis will assist in determining key beneficiaries and the proportion to be contributed by different sectors, and I think that process is currently underway. Mr Zacharin, would you like to add anything?

Mr ZACHARIN: It is a very transparent process. We have all the livestock industries and Horse SA involved. It is a bit more difficult getting to all the lifestyle people, but that is something that we will be working up through our community education and awareness program once we have most of the details worked through.

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you. Minister, as far as the funds raised from, I guess, both the property identification code fee and the biosecurity fee, what will the funds be used for, and what will both commercial property owners and non-commercial owners get for their money? As part of the overall gathering of the funds, will there be an education and training program for the public to better understand and manage biosecurity on their properties?

The Hon. M.F. O'BRIEN: Member for Hammond, I will give this over to Mr Zacharin; he is much more involved in the process at this time.

Mr ZACHARIN: As I see it, already 17,000 property identification codes are on our system, but that is not cost recovered. By moving to a mandatory system we will probably end up with close to 25,000 property identification codes on our system, so we are recovering the cost of the administration of the property identification code database. That is what people will get if they are non-commercial. It is just about us understanding where livestock and horses are for the purpose of responding to an emergency animal disease or responding to a flood or a fire situation, as PIRSA is responsible for agricultural and animal emergency services under the Emergency Management Act.

The biosecurity fee (although the details are still to be worked out) will be covering the animal health services that are provided with our exotic disease surveillance program, our market assurance programs and our emergency preparedness programs in relation to a lot of the testing we do through the vet labs for suspected exotic diseases each year.

Mr PEDERICK: It is almost like double dipping. Minister, will that biosecurity fee be used to educate people on how to better manage their properties and, in particular, how will it protect their properties from any biosecurity issues?

The Hon. M.F. O'BRIEN: Again, I will give this over to Mr Zacharin, because he is very much immersed in this at the moment. As he explained, we are setting this up. We are having a fairly extensive Internal discussion to make sure that we get this right, but he is very much across the detail.

Mr ZACHARIN: We will be ramping up our community education awareness program about what we are doing with our animal health programs. We have a lot of veterinarians and animal health officers in regional communities. For example, I think that in the last financial year we attended about 250 stock saleyards. We help people with footrot, lice and all sorts of animal health issues that producers are having. So, with respect to their contribution to the Animal Health Program, as I said, it is covering those particular areas, but there is no double dipping here.

The sheep and cattle industries already contribute to endemic disease control such as footrot and lice through the Primary Industry Funding Schemes Act. For example, the \$2-odd million that is collected under the sheep fund is money provided by producers for programs that producers request PIRSA to provide. So, they are not covered under these cost recovery arrangements. If industry said they no longer wanted to conduct those services, well PIRSA would exit that activity.

Mr PEDERICK: Minister, in relation to the same budget line, how do the proposed biosecurity measures differ from or do they complement the federal scheme, the Emergency Animal Disease

Response Agreement (known as EADRA); and can you assure the horse community in particular that they will not be paying twice for the same thing?

The Hon. M.F. O'BRIEN: In essence, the PIC scheme is a national scheme. I think we have some discretion as to the ambit of the scheme in South Australia. We made the decision that we would pick up the hobbyists and those individuals who have one or two pets (if you like)—one or two horses or a couple of sheep lawnmowers on their property—but in response to the second part of your question, I will pass that over to Will.

Mr ZACHARIN: Under the emergency animal deed (EADRA), we have an agreement with the commonwealth and the states that will respond to animal health emergencies. If we require significant emergency response funding, we go back to cabinet. Under those arrangements, such as the equine influenza outbreak in 2007 in New South Wales and Queensland, although we did not have the disease in South Australia, we mounted a significant response and went back to cabinet for those funding arrangements. We will continue to uphold our emergency management agreements with the other jurisdictions.

Mr PEDERICK: Minister, your adviser is telling me that this is not a double up of a fee for doing the same thing as far as biosecurity.

Mr ZACHARIN: Through the chair, if it was an emergency, again we would respond in terms of our emergency response protocols. If it was of a level where we were able to absorb that contingency within PIRSA's biosecurity fund, we would. If it is significant, for example, something like locusts, we go back to cabinet for specific emergency response funding.

Mr PEDERICK: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 6.7, dot points 13 and 14. What is the total cost of establishing Biosecurity SA?

The Hon. M.F. O'BRIEN: There was no cost of establishment. My understanding was that we had the capacity, but we decided, as part of a national agreement—there is a national biosecurity agreement—that we would rename and probably, in part, reconfigure our existing operation under the banner of Biosecurity SA. A subsequent step was to take those officers from what were the two existing environmental agencies in South Australia across into PIRSA, because it was decided by minister Caica and me, and ultimately by cabinet, that it was not a prudent application of resources to have, say, for argument sake, veterinarians spread over two or three agencies, they would be better located within PIRSA. So, that is what was done and that movement has been reflected in the budget, but I will pass over to the chief executive officer for additional comment.

Mr KNIGHT: We have seen in recent years an increasing emphasis placed on the importance of biosecurity for Australia. We know that it is essential for our animal and plant industries, as well as increasingly in the environment. This came to the fore with the Beale review that the commonwealth government launched following the outbreak of equine influenza in Australia in 2007. Over the last few years, one thing that was becoming increasingly apparent to us was that this idea that PIRSA looked after biosecurity issues when it affected the production industries but we left it to others, such as the environment department and the former department of water, land and biodiversity conservation, when perhaps they were more environmental and social pests, was not really workable long term.

So, for a while now I have been sold on the idea of having a single biosecurity capacity for the state. In talking to my colleagues in other states, it was obvious that we were not the only state thinking along these lines. Queensland established Biosecurity Queensland a number of years ago, and other states are moving in the same direction. There was a period of negotiation. As the minister said, it was finally agreed by himself and minister Caica. The cost is in Budget Paper 4, Volume 2, page 6.18, Sub-program 2.6: Biosecurity. A number of staff were transferred across from the former department of water, land and biodiversity conservation.

Their funding came with them, and they had been responsible for a range of what you might call non-production-type pests, but also things like branched broomrape and so on. There had been a lot of inconsistencies between the way PIRSA was handling production pests—and I think we have done that very effectively as a state over many years—and the way these other so-called non-production pests were being handled. The cost of Biosecurity SA is in those numbers. Also in those numbers is the cost of actually handling outbreaks. There is a big increase from the 2009-10 budget to the 2010-11 budget, which represents the funding provided by the government to deal with this year's locust outbreak.

You can see there is a significant increment between the two years. There are a few other things happening as well, but by and large we have implemented Biosecurity SA within existing resources. We have done that by bringing the resources from a couple of agencies together. The aim is to create a more effective one-stop shop. I have used the analogy a few times that, when you have to go to a war—and I think the minister has aptly used the term, 'We are going to war against the locusts at the moment'—you want your army, your air force and your navy all operating under one joint command, and that is what we have done with Biosecurity SA.

There is still some accountability back to the environment minister, because he has responsibilities under certain acts but, when we are on the ground fighting a war (this time it is locusts but next year it might be fruit fly or something else), there is one command and a single head of that command. We have established this senior position that is now occupied by Will Zacharin as the Executive Director of Biosecurity SA. I think that brings us pretty much to the forefront in Australia in terms of organisational and governance arrangements for Biosecurity SA reporting to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries as the lead minister on biosecurity matters in South Australia.

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you. On the same budget line, in regard to the new cost recovery biosecurity fees that will be inflicted on people with livestock and, I believe, people with farms, whether they be horticulture or cropping, is it obvious that those fees will be used to fund that new department of Biosecurity SA?

The Hon. M.F. O'BRIEN: They will. We are unabashedly moving to a cost recovery model and, in doing that, we are using commonwealth government guidelines that insist upon a high degree of transparency, both in the raising of revenue and its application. My understanding is that those guidelines are in turn informed by a series of recommendations to have come out of the Productivity Commission. So there is a fairly tight advisory regime that the commonwealth apply and we are applying the same model. All fees that are raised for the provision of biosecurity services will be applied to the provision of biosecurity services. There will be no shifting of revenue into other areas.

Mr PEDERICK: On the same budget line, what will be Biosecurity SA's full complement of staff and are they being sourced from Primary Industries staff or are new people being recruited as well?

The Hon. M.F. O'BRIEN: I will ask Will Zacharin to answer that.

Mr ZACHARIN: The new Biosecurity SA division has approximately 190 staff, but because of the branched broomrape program we employ up to about 60 casual operators each year on that program, so there is a large number of casuals which could take the figure up to 230 in any year. It really depends on how many casuals we need. We have 130 people mobilised for the locust program at the moment and a lot of them are short-term casual employees, as well, so our numbers do move around a bit.

Essentially, the division has been the amalgamation of the PIRSA biosecurity units which include the existing Animal Health Branch, the Plant and Food Standards Branch, the Rural Chemicals Branch, the Aquatic Pests Emergency Management, and from DWLBC—the old environment agency—we have the NRM Biosecurity Unit, the Branched Broomrape Eradication Program and the Dog Fence Board.

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you. Minister, I refer to Budget Paper 6, page 72, the memorandum item describing the \$12.8 million allowed for locust control. My question is about the money available for locust control. The minister has stated that more will be made available if necessary. Has a limit been set by the Treasurer on what extra amount may be utilised and, if so, what is that amount?

The Hon. M.F. O'BRIEN: There is no upper limit. We will spend what we have to spend and we will not cut corners. We are going to deal with this particular problem. We have a bumper harvest coming on, not only in grains but also in grape, although grape is probably going to be an issue with selling. However, across a large range of South Australian primary industry sectors there is going to be an issue with locusts and cabinet has made a decision that whatever is required to deal conclusively with this threat will be made available.

Mr PEDERICK: On the same budget line, has the government (and the department) had a good look at the possibility of locust swarms spreading across the state and has it rolled out an education program for farmers who are not in the Upper North, the Riverland and the Mallee, as far as identification and knowing what to do and reporting?

The Hon. M.F. O'BRIEN: We have. Obviously, the bulk of the campaign has been directed at those areas immediately under threat. However, probably some six to eight weeks ago a small group from PIRSA and myself met with the editor of *The Advertiser*. It was an arranged meeting for the very purpose of enlisting the assistance of *The Advertiser* in getting to the broad South Australian community to make them aware of the potential risk outside areas that we are currently targeting. I believe that they have done an admirable job in alerting the whole of the South Australian community to the potential severity of the threat.

From the reports that I am receiving both from within South Australia and also by way of a national linkup (I think it was last Friday) with other state ministers and the federal minister, we have not underestimated the severity of the threat. In fact, the CE has pointed out that we are in a better position than the other states in terms of our forward planning.

Middle western New South Wales has a far higher degree of egg laying than we are aware of; so for New South Wales there is an issue. We are hoping that the New South Wales government and the Australian Plague Locust Commission will be able to deal with that particular issue, so that we do not ultimately have to deal with fly-ins. I also have a note from Mr Zacharin that staff on Eyre Peninsula and northern Yorke Peninsula have been well and truly briefed and will be in a position to respond if necessary. I do not know whether, Will, you would like to make further comment on our education campaign.

Mr ZACHARIN: Because most of the egg laying and fly-ins we saw in March and April were through the Mid North and the Riverland Murray Mallee that is where we are seeing the emergence now. It is always possible to get fly-ins onto Yorke Peninsula or Eyre Peninsula. We have contingency plans in place should that occur.

We have some recent reports of locusts around Buckleboo. We are dealing with those landowners directly, and if it becomes a large enough target PIRSA can go in and spray those targets. We also have staff in places as far west as Ceduna, so if any issues raised there are beyond the capacity of the landowners to spray—and they are required under the Plant Health Act to spray for locusts on their properties—and if it is a large target, again, we have contingency plans in place to be able to expand our program and go in to assist landowners.