

DRAFT SECOND READING SPEECH

HON GUY BARNETT MP

BIOSECURITY (CONSEQUENTIAL AND TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS) BILL 2020

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Madam Speaker

I move that the Bill now be read a second time.

I think I can safely say that there has never been a time in our recent history when the importance of biosecurity has been clearer and more apparent to all Tasmanians.

When I rose in this place last year to begin the second reading for the *Biosecurity Bill 2019*, I noted that we faced increasing challenges in managing biosecurity. That globalisation of trade, internet commerce, and the modern ease of travel had established new pathways for the introduction of pests and diseases to the State.

Of course, Madam Speaker, when I said those words, I did not know that in less than a year's time Tasmania and the rest of the world would be grappling with a devastating global pandemic. That Tasmania's borders would be closed to all but essential travellers; that our tourism and hospitality industries would be forced into hibernation; and that a large proportion of our workforce and schoolchildren would have to be working and learning from home.

None of us then knew what was coming, and now it has come, COVID-19 has well and truly demonstrated the need for us to be prepared for biosecurity emergencies. Our world has changed in what seems like the blink of an eye. But COVID-19 is not the first global pandemic Tasmania has faced and, unfortunately, it is unlikely to be the last.

If there is a silver lining from the COVID-19 emergency, it is the way it has shown Tasmanians how blessed we are to be living on a beautiful island with an agricultural sector and environment that can feed us and sustain our community in a time of crisis. And when the crisis passes (and hopefully that day will come soon) I have no doubt that a healthy and resilient agricultural sector, and natural environment will be the keys to our rapid and ongoing economic recovery.

Madam Speaker, along with the *Public Health Act 1997* and *Emergency Management Act 2006*, which are the State laws covering human biosecurity, it is critical that we have effective legislation to protect our agricultural industries and natural environment from pests and disease. That is precisely what we now have in the *Biosecurity Act 2019*, which was passed by Parliament in August last year, and commenced operation on the first day of January this year.

The Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (the Department) is now implementing the Act through the progressive development of a suite of new regulations, administrative systems and resources.

The Department is well advanced with the implementation project, with changes being rolled out in a staged manner to minimise impact to business and the community.

The Biosecurity Advisory Committee has now been established as an independent advisory body under section 271 of the Act. The selection and formation of the Committee followed a broad public 'expression of interest' process.

The committee includes a mix of skills and representatives from a range of industry sectors across the State, including wild fisheries and aquaculture sectors, animal and plant-based agricultural industries, tourism industries, environmental organisations, the science and education sectors, and public administration expertise at both the State and local government level.

Other key implementation tasks currently underway or soon to commence (though there have been delays arising from the COVID-19 emergency) include the development of regulations and a biosecurity program for the Salmon Industry; regulations for the bee-keeping industry; and development of the Tasmanian Biosecurity Compendium.

The final stages of the implementation of the new Act will involve the repeal of the seven Acts being replaced by the new legislation.

The repealed Acts are referenced in many other related Acts and regulations that will continue to operate after the Biosecurity Act is fully implemented. These references will need to be corrected and updated to reflect the new legislation. That is the main purpose of the Bill that is now before the House. It is machinery legislation that is ancillary to the Biosecurity Act and does not introduce any new policy or legal requirements in itself.

Rather than include consequential and transitional provisions within the principal Biosecurity Act, it was decided to make provision for such measures in a later, separate Bill. This was to enable any consequential or transitional matters that were not identified before the initial implementation of the new Act began to be addressed. However, I am pleased to say the Department advises that there have been no such unexpected issues or problems with implementation to this point.

So in conclusion Madam Speaker, this Bill represents another key step in the roll-out of Tasmania's new biosecurity framework, and I commend it to the House.