



Speech by

Hon. Tim Mulherin

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Hansard Wednesday, 14 March 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Biosecurity Queensland; Sea World

Hon. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (10.09 am): Biosecurity Queensland, the new unit in the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries responsible for guarding Queensland against plant and animal pests and diseases, passed its first important test yesterday. On Monday, Sea World presented Biosecurity Queensland with samples from a number of dead penguins and, by turning around test results in 24 hours showing that the cause of death was not avian influenza, we have diffused what might have been a very serious situation.

Biosecurity Queensland's chief veterinary officer, Dr Ron Glanville, advises that 25 of Sea World's 37 penguins have died since Thursday, 8 March 2007. The veterinary surgeon at the facility originally sent samples to a private veterinary pathology service for testing. Samples were subsequently sent to the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries biosecurity science laboratory on Monday, 12 March. Laboratory testing was undertaken to exclude avian influenza, as is a normal precaution for all cases where there are a large number of unexplained bird deaths. Further testing is continuing to identify the cause of the deaths of the 25 birds and we are continuing to work in close consultation with Sea World.

Biosecurity Queensland has brought together in a new, single agency the experience and expertise of more than 500 staff from the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and around 180 staff from the Department of Natural Resources and Water. Biosecurity Queensland brings together land protection capabilities, plant, animal and marine biosecurity, chemical use and food safety, and animal welfare. It will shortly include some key areas of the Environmental Protection Agency. Our aim is to operate a more coordinated, efficient service that makes the best possible use of the available talent and resources. In fact, we aim to lead Australia and the world in some of our biosecurity work. This means a better service for Queensland primary producers, property owners, the environment and the general public. The new unit, launched just two weeks ago on 1 March, has already proven its worth by dealing with the Sea World incident quickly, efficiently and professionally.