



Speech by

Hon. Tim Mulherin

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Hansard Tuesday, 16 June 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Sunland Freshwater Fish Hatchery; North Queensland Floods, Recovery Assistance

Hon. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland) (10.05 am): Today I will table the first interim report of the Noosa Fish Health Investigation Task Force. Six separate syndromes relating to fish health at the Sunland Freshwater Fish Hatchery have been identified, but to date no definitive diagnosis has been found.

Syndrome 1 refers to sudden deaths of multiple species between November 2005 and January 2006. The scientific subcommittee accepts that contamination from a spray event is a plausible explanation. Syndrome 2 refers to sudden deaths of silver and golden perch in October 2007. There is insufficient information available to explain this event. Syndrome 3 refers to spinning juvenile silver and golden perch in October 2007 and October 2008, and syndrome 4 refers to deformities of silver and golden perch in February 2008. In both cases the fish benefited from treatment with atropine, which counteracts organophosphate and carbamate compounds. The subcommittee accepts that these chemicals may have played a part, but the source and specific chemicals are not determined.

Syndrome 5 has drawn the most attention. In July 2008 four Australian bass females produced deformed larvae, including many with two heads. These females were sourced from the Noosa River and spawned in a shed protected from spray drift. At this point, no explanation can be provided and investigations continue. Syndrome 6 refers to the sudden death of silver perch in December 2008. Again, there is no definitive explanation. Multiple factors including gill fluke infestation, chemicals, water temperature or oxygen levels may be to blame.

The task force acknowledges that not finding a chemical does not rule out possible impact from a chemical. Two samples have tested positive for chemical contamination. Cypermethrin was found in one fish feed sample and low levels of carbendazim, atrazine and metolachlor were found in Cooloothin Creek, about two kilometres downstream from the farm.

This is a complex investigation with no simple answers. Consequently, it should be no surprise that there are differences of opinion regarding this matter. Some within the task force believe the report does not go far enough in identifying chemicals as the cause of the problems, but overall the consensus is that it is not possible to provide a definitive opinion on the cause at this stage. Another interim report is expected in September, with the final report due next February.

Finally, there is good news today for small businesses and primary producers affected by the February floods. Our request to the federal government for further assistance has been successful. Recovery grants of up to \$15,000 will now be provided to eligible small businesses and primary producers to assist in clean-up and restoration activities. These grants will be jointly funded by the Queensland and Commonwealth governments. I seek leave to table the interim report.

Leave granted.

Tabled paper: Noosa Fish Health Investigation Taskforce—Interim Report No.1, June 2009 [[377](#)].