



General Media Enquires

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Report confirms gaps in biosecurity

There are no surprises that gaps in Western Australia's biosecurity defence have been found by the Auditor General, according to the Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association.

In July the union has said the Barnett Government was playing Russian roulette with WA's biosecurity by reducing staff numbers and inspections at airports and interstate passenger train services.

And last year it questioned why the Department of Agriculture was slashing the number of quarantine dog handlers based at Perth Airport.

Auditor General Colin Murphy's report that identified gaps in managing plant and animal pests was tabled in State Parliament last Thursday.

CPSU/CSA branch assistant secretary Rikki Hendon said the report highlighted the real risk of cutbacks to the Department of Agriculture, particularly in the biosecurity area.

"We are glad the report supports our long-term concerns," Ms Hendon said.

"There are no surprises in this report as it reaffirms what our members in agriculture have been telling us and what we have been telling the public for some time now."

Ms Hendon welcomed the Auditor General's observation that a reduction in staff and resources was a key reason why there was a gap in biosecurity cover.

"With biosecurity cutbacks there is now an expectation on landowners, other government agencies and the general public to pick up the slack and very clearly from what we have read in this report this has not happened.

"Any savings the government makes by reducing our biosecurity defence is minimal compared to the cost of prohibited insects, plants, weeds or diseases invading Western Australia.

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“We call on the government to immediately stop the cutbacks and to reinvest in biosecurity that protects our vital agricultural industry.”

FOR COMMENT:

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