



**National Council of
Women of New Zealand**

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Wahine O Aotearoa

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**Submission to the Primary Production Committee
on the Biosecurity Amendment Bill**

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organisation representing 43 nationally organised societies. It has 34 branches spread throughout the country to which women from some 150 societies are affiliated.

This submission has been written on behalf of the Environment Standing Committee, and is supported by policy resolutions passed at the national meeting in 1992.

Introduction

NCWNZ is pleased to be able to comment on this Bill. While recognising that its primary purpose is to address changes made to government ministries and to tidy up some of the provisions, the Bill provides a welcome opportunity for review.

Comments on individual clauses

Clause 4; to ensure that the broad protective provisions of the Wildlife Act 1953 do not prevent using the Biosecurity Act 1993 to control a wildlife organism that is proving to have undesirable effects.

NCWNZ is in full support of this clause. There are many instances in New Zealand where introduced organisms have become pests and it is counter-productive to have such organisms protected under a different Act. It is important for indigenous biodiversity that wildlife and other pests are controlled.

Clause 5; to allow inspectors to carry out inspections and treatment of unaccompanied imported goods in biosecurity control areas.

The extension of section 30A by this clause provides overall coverage of areas where unaccompanied goods may enter New Zealand. It closes any possible gaps to ensure that all material imported into New Zealand is inspected. This is important for maintaining effective biosecurity control and this clause is supported by NCWNZ.

Clause 6; which imposes a duty on all persons to report the presence of organisms not normally seen in New Zealand.

This clause is needed to ensure that people, especially those who could reasonably be expected to have some knowledge, report or inform authorities about novel organisms. Such information can be used to assess the location or rate of spread of introduced organisms and allows control or eradication measures to be set up if appropriate. Because it is incumbent on all persons to report unusual organisms, it is essential that resources are allocated to educate the public in which





organisms to look out for and give good publicity when novel organisms are found so that people can fulfil their responsibilities under the proposed amendment.

Clauses 11 and 12; to make chief technical officers and their deputies government employees. This is a very necessary precaution as it ensures that such officers are accountable under the terms of their employment.

Clause 18; to reduce the notice period of aerial spraying from 2 weeks to 24 hours where a 2 week period would seriously damage the chance of containing or eradicating an undesirable organism. NCWNZ has some misgivings about this clause. Shortening the notice period from 2 weeks is desirable for making a rapid response to an undesirable organism, particularly where the possibility of eradication exists. However reducing the notice to 24 hours puts pressure on individuals and families with health problems and who may be unable to take precautions to mitigate the effects in such a short time – a 48 hour notice period would give a longer time frame in which to take preventative actions. Where this short notice period is invoked, every effort should be made to inform affected persons and NCWNZ supports the use of radio and television as well as newspaper advertising to disseminate relevant information.

Clauses 19(2), 24 and 25; to allow for the recovery of costs, new offences, and penalties. Discretion must be exercised in these areas so that those who may not understand their responsibilities under the Act, such as children, are dealt with appropriately. Education of ordinary citizens is important in reducing these situations.

Conclusion

NCWNZ supports the overall tenor of the Bill and its clauses. Biosecurity is an area where there needs to be provision for swift and decisive action – an unwanted organism can spread quickly with increased risk of becoming established and eradication more difficult. While agreeing with the need for short notice, NCWNZ suggests a 48 hour period to allow susceptible individuals to take their own preventative action. It is important that all inward goods are inspected, “risk” goods seized, and planes sprayed as they were previously. In tandem with spraying, research into their effects on human health is needed to reduce the effects on susceptible people, whether these are in the aircraft or on the ground. With the rapid increase in air travel seen over recent years has come the greatly increase biosecurity risks, and it is critical that our borders are secured from unwanted organisms as far as practicable. In passing these amendments into law, the Ministries concerned need to take into account the ease with which new organisms can enter by sea and work with the parties concerned on the Oceans Policy currently being developed. The problem of ballast water as a way of introducing unwanted organisms needs attention.

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