



Parliament of South Australia
QUESTION TIME
4 March 2020

FRANCES BEDFORD MP JP *Member for Florey*

FRUIT FLY

Ms BEDFORD (Florey) (14:38): My question is to the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development. Are you now in the position to inform the house if you or anyone from any of your offices or your department have waived any fines or have any knowledge of any fines being waived in relation to the new regime for fruit fly zero tolerance?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE (Chaffey—Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development) (14:38): I thank the member for Florey for her question and, yes, I have asked a few questions as to just what the impact has been. What I might say is that the zero tolerance approach has been implemented. It was implemented on 4 January 2019, and what we have seen since then has been a remarkable change. The support to the horticulture industry here in South Australia has been met with applause.

We have seen the implementation of the zero tolerance approach and, yes, people coming into South Australia through Yamba and people coming through random roadblocks have been met by biosecurity officers. Those who are bringing fruit in illegally have been given fines. Those who have been let off have had dockets, and those with receipts of fruit purchased have been given consideration and those people have been let go.

What I must say is that the amount of host material seized at Yamba for 2018, before the zero tolerance, was 27 tonnes. That is more than a semitrailer load of fruit that was confiscated at the border. Since the zero tolerance has come into play here in South Australia, we have reduced that to 13 tonnes.

That shows you that the zero tolerance is working. That shows you that people are now more considered coming into South Australia, bringing in host materials and putting the horticulture industry at risk.

What I would say is that the zero tolerance approach is working and will continue to work. But what I am alarmed about is particularly the member—

The SPEAKER: Could the minister be seated for one moment. Point of order.

The Hon. S.C. MULLIGHAN: The question was specifically about fines that may have been waived.

The SPEAKER: I have the question. I am listening to the minister's answer and, if he is starting to drift, minister, I would advise you to come back to the substance of the question. But I will listen carefully.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: Thank you, sir, and I am sure that the member for Lee has never bitten into a peach and had maggots because that is what happens when we have fruit fly infested fruit.

The SPEAKER: That may be so, minister, but that is irrelevant. That is completely irrelevant and a personal reflection, so I ask you to come back to the substance of the question, please.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: What I can say to the member for Florey is that this government is being reactive, it is being proactive and we are dealing with the issue that you raised. To date, 146 roadblock fines have been waived out of 2,223 requests for review. My office has not waived any fines. The department of biosecurity is the authority to assess and waive those fines.

But what I can say is that the zero tolerance approach is working. It is further protecting the \$1.28 billion horticulture industry. We are being proactive; we are not being reactive. In a previous regime, we continue to pick up the pieces after a fruit fly outbreak. A declared outbreak means job losses and reputational damage. What it means now is that we can get on with exporting our fruit and we can protect

our horticulture industry. Currently, every time there is a biosecurity breach with Queensland fruit fly it is costing taxpayers millions of dollars.

We are making sure that we do everything we can as a government to negate the pressure at our borders, making sure that we look after our horticulture sector and making sure that South Australia's reputation of being fruit fly free is upheld. I am very, very proud to say that as a government we continue to strengthen our borders, to strengthen our biosecurity here in South Australia, and that we are relentless with making sure that people don't bring fruit into South Australia.

Ms BEDFORD (Florey)

(14:42): Supplementary: minister, does that mean I should have written to the office of biosecurity rather than you when I drew your attention to my constituent who went to Yamba with a docket? What was different with her docket to the docket where the fine was waived? You have just said a docket fine was waived, so I am not sure how that docket is more superior to my constituent's docket.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE (Chaffey—Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development) (14:43): To the member for Florey, I am very happy to look further into that, but the relevant docket would be for the purchase of that fruit—

Ms Bedford: It was.

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE: —that was purchased in South Australia. So if the purchase is made in South Australia, with a docket of proof of receipt for that fruit, then it is used as a defence at the border or it is used as a defence at the random roadblock. What I would say is that the biosecurity officers, as I understand it, would wave through any person bringing fruit into South Australia or into the fruit fly free areas of the Riverland with a docket and they would not receive an on-the-spot fine. If they did receive a fine, I am very happy to look at that and sit with you to work a way through that. But I have not heard of any dockets that have been produced and then a fine being issued upon the issue of that receipt.

Ms BEDFORD: If I may ask a second supplementary, Mr Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Final question, member for Florey.

Ms BEDFORD (Florey) (14:43): So I should have written to the office of biosecurity rather than to you?

The Hon. T.J. WHETSTONE (Chaffey—Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development) (14:44): I am the minister responsible for biosecurity, so I am very happy for you to write me the letter and then I deal with it within the department of biosecurity from there.



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