Date Introduced: 22 February 1985
House: House of Representatives
Presented by: Hon. Neal Blewett, M.P., Minister for Health

Short Digest of Bill

Purpose

To restructure the administration of the Quarantine Service to enable animal and plant quarantine to be placed under the control of the Department of Primary Industry.

Background

There are three major areas of the Quarantine Service - human, animal and plant. All have been administered by the Department of Health since 1921, reflecting the emphasis on human quarantine at that time due to the spread of epidemic diseases, such as smallpox and influenza. Less weight was placed on animal and plant quarantine, the natural barriers provided by Australia's isolation being considered sufficient. More recently, the increase in world trade has focussed attention on the importance of animal and plant quarantine. This is further reinforced by the fear of the damage that could be caused to Australia's exports should certain animal or plant diseases be found in this country.

The administration of the Quarantine Service was considered by the Senate Standing Committee on Natural Resources in 1979.[1] After considering submissions from various sources, including the Departments of Health and Primary Industry, the Committee recommended that the areas of animal and plant quarantine be transferred to the Department of Primary Industry.[2] The transfer of responsibilities was effected by the Administrative Arrangements Order signed by the Governor General on 13 December 1984.

Outline

The Bill provides for the dual administration of the Quarantine Act 1908 (Principal Act) between the Departments of Health (human quarantine) and Primary Industry (animal and plant quarantine).
Main Provisions

Clause 5 inserts new sections 8A, 8B, 9 and 9AA into the Principal Act to provide for two Directors of Quarantine (one for human quarantine and one for animal and plant quarantine) and corresponding Chief Quarantine Officers and quarantine officers. Proposed section 8A details the senior officers responsible for human quarantine, together with their powers and responsibilities. Proposed section 8B performs the same function for animal and plant quarantine. Proposed sections 9 and 9AA detail the method of appointment for the officers of human quarantine and animal and plant quarantine, respectively.

Clause 6, which inserts section 10B into the Principal Act, gives the Directors of Quarantine the express authority to delegate their powers in order to overcome current administrative problems.

The remainder of the Bill deals with amendments consequential to the administrative changes.

For further information, if required, contact:

14 March 1985

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References


2. Ibid, p.65.