

PORTS AND HARBOURS, GUIDELINES FOR EXCHANGE OF BALLAST WATER

694. Hon Giz Watson to the Minister for Transport:

With respect to ships visiting Western Australian ports I ask -

- (1) What are the current requirements under Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) policy and/or any other policy to prevent the introduction of exotic species in ballast water into Western Australian port environments?
- (2) Are the AQIS guidelines that direct ships captains to exchange their ballast water in deep water compulsory?
- (3) In no to (2), does the Minister support mandatory requirements to prevent further introduction of ballast water species?
- (4) If not, why not?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE replied:

- (1) Australia has an established system for managing the ballast water of shipping to prevent the introduction of exotic species into Australian waters. This covers, of course, Western Australian port environments. Controls on the discharge of ballast water and sediment from ships entering Australia are administered by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) which applies the Australian Ballast Water Guidelines.

These Guidelines encourage ship operators, when loading ballast for a voyage to Australia, to make every effort to minimise the uptake of harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens. Before arriving in Australia, ships are encouraged to exchange ballast water in mid ocean so that the ballast in ships tanks is clean when entering Australian ports. This exchange normally occurs in open ocean, outside Australian waters and greater than 200 nautical miles from shore.

Every one of these ships is encouraged to maintain a ballast water management plan. It is mandatory for ships masters to report on their ballast management practices and AQIS applies verification tests to ensure accurate reporting. Ships masters are also required to provide access to safe on-board ballast water and/or ballast sediment sampling points for AQIS officers. The removal of sediment resulting from tank and/or hold cleaning must be disposed of in an AQIS approved manner on land.

- (2) The Guidelines are not currently compulsory but elements within the guidelines such as reporting and the removal of sediment are mandatory. However, the Commonwealth Government has committed itself to introducing new mandatory ballast water arrangements for international shipping. These are expected to be implemented in July 2001.
- (3) Yes, the implementation of new arrangements is supported.
- (4) Not applicable.