

CORONAVIRUS — SKILLED AGRICULTURAL WORKERS —  
BLADIN VILLAGE, NORTHERN TERRITORY

**751. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:**

My question without notice of which some notice, but not as much as I thought, unfortunately, was given is to the Minister for Agriculture and Food, but I understand that she has an answer prepared.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan** interjected.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I missed the response; sorry.

**The PRESIDENT:** Honourable member, just focus on the question in front of you.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** Certainly. Thank you, President.

I refer to the potential development of Bladin Village as a quarantine hub in the Northern Territory to allow workers to enter Australia to work in areas of worker shortage, including agriculture.

- (1) Did the response that the minister gave Hon Colin de Grussa to question without notice 688, asked on 9 September 2021, in which she said the government had “been doing the costings” indicate that a formal proposal or business case is being progressed for the use of Bladin Village?
- (2) If yes to (1), when will the proposal or business case be completed and when will it be sent to the commonwealth?
- (3) If no to (1), is a business case or formal process going to be written or developed?
- (4) If no to (3), why not?

**Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of the question.

- (1)–(4) My advice is that as of today the Northern Territory government is still uncertain about whether it is prepared to allow this facility to open. Of course, it is within its jurisdiction. It has pointed out to the commonwealth, I understand again today, that it needs assistance with health and policing if this facility is to be opened. Although it is true that we have been looking at the numbers and it would be a costly proposition, there is no point in advancing this until such time as the Northern Territory is comfortable with or it has agreed that it is prepared to allow that facility to be used. Again, we say that there are members opposite who have friends in the Liberal Party at the federal level, presumably, and the National Party, presumably—I am not quite sure how things are going between the Nationals WA and Barnaby at the moment.

This clearly is something whereby we need the federal government to make a decision that it is going to help the states. We all know that each state is struggling to provide the medical and police services necessary to keep the system afloat. The commonwealth has been prepared to provide help in New South Wales. What the Northern Territory and ourselves are asking is can it —

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** I asked about the preparation of a business case.

**Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN:** There is no business case until such time as we know that we can have a facility. There is no possibility of this thing getting legs unless the Northern Territory government is confident that it can open, and it is asking for the commonwealth to help it with its medical and policing side.