

25 July 2018

The Ministry for Primary Industries took a successful prosecution against both Brett Edwards and Mangere Bulk Seafoods in 2013 when both parties were convicted of serious offences under the Fisheries Act.

During the course of that investigation, MPI became aware of evidence that formed the basis of the case that is the centre of Judge Neave and Judge Johns' decisions.

MPI respects judicial comment and has carefully considered the findings of both judges.

The Ministry's Director of Compliance Stephanie Rowe says MPI acknowledges and accepts the criticisms made by the court of MPI's conduct in relation to the investigation pertinent to the judges' findings.

"We recognise there were procedural matters we got wrong in our handling of this case and have carefully reviewed our processes and procedures in light of the judgements and made appropriate changes to ensure an instance like this is not repeated.

"It should be noted, these shortcomings relate to events that happened several years ago. A level of inexperience was evident in the way this operation was handled. MPI has already put in place a number of processes and procedures to avoid those mistakes being repeated and we are confident they will not be.

"In relation to the search and seizure aspect, we have introduced formal investigation training and certification, to ensure best practice is understood and carried out.

"We have on-going training in place for our compliance staff on the importance of exercising statutory powers properly. We will also be providing additional search warrant training - both in terms of what needs to be included in the application and in its execution.

"Current practice ensures that appropriate resources are directed to large investigations and that serious fraud matters are brought to a conclusion as soon as possible.

"MPI considered the investigation was appropriate because it involved allegations of large scale fraud of the quota management system.

"Accordingly, we stand by the decision to commence and continue the prosecution until we received the decision by Judge Johns."

Ends

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