



**Australian Government**

**Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry**

## **November 2022 Senate Estimates – Opening Statement Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

- Chair and Senators, thank you for the opportunity to make a short opening statement this afternoon.
- I would like to start by acknowledging the extreme challenges currently faced by many people affected by the severe flood events on the east coast and inland Australia, as well as in Tasmania.
- I have been in regular contact with my state counterparts in those areas to assure them of the department's support, including through the Agriculture Senior Officials' Committee.
- Our thoughts are with the many farming families and communities impacted by the disastrous floods, and especially to those mourning the tragic loss of human life.
- The significant damage to crops in those areas, both in losses and the inability to plant, and the impact that the floods have had on food processing and manufacture, is truly devastating.
- The department itself has staff working in flood affected areas, particularly in export meat establishments, and I put my thanks on the record for their commitment and service.
- As you would be aware, under the Machinery of Government changes that took effect from 1 July 2022, the former Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment became the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.
- The environment and water functions, along with associated corporate resources, were moved to the new Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. I wish

colleagues that have moved to DCCEEW all the best in their new endeavours.

- Working as the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment we delivered many significant integrated outcomes. These outcomes are included in the final DAWE annual report.
- While we are now in different portfolios these important connections remain and we will continue to work with colleagues across the breadth of issues impacting our portfolios. I was delighted to be confirmed as the Secretary for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; as many of you know, I feel a deep affinity for the work undertaken by this department.
- I would also like to note that, since we last met, Mr Andrew Tongue retired from the Australian Public Service after a long and distinguished career which including receiving a Public Service Medal.
- As many of you know, Mr Tongue's last role was as Deputy Secretary of the Biosecurity and Compliance Group within my department. I knew Mr Tongue throughout his 37 year career across the Commonwealth and Victorian public services. His many roles included as Associate Secretary for Indigenous Affairs at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and as Secretary of the Victorian Department of the Premier and Cabinet. We thank him for his distinguished service to the Australian public, and wish him and Vicki and their family all the best for the future.
- Dr Chris Locke has moved across into Mr Tongue's role from the previous Environment and Heritage Group.
- In our new configuration the department comprises approximately 5400 staff. While our primary national office

location remains in Canberra, we are represented in all capital cities as well as in regional centres and overseas, with staff in 176 separate locations across Australia and internationally.

- Our department works to safeguard and grow sustainable agriculture, fisheries, and forestry for the benefit of all Australians.
- Our objectives include increasing the contribution our agricultural, fisheries and forestry industries make towards a healthy, sustainable environment. We will continue to provide national leadership and work in partnership and collaboration, including with our portfolio agencies, Research and Development Corporations, peak industry bodies and industry as a whole.
- We will continue to deliver on Our Blueprint for Being Future Ready and align it with the government's priorities for Australian Public Sector reform. This includes strengthening our ability to deliver high quality and forward-looking policy advice and regulatory services, and strengthening our cross-cutting science, information, and research activities.
- Our key work includes supporting the government on jobs and skills, climate change, sustainable agriculture, trade, and of course biosecurity.
- We have a strong focus on working in partnership with First Nations people and are committed to achieve the best possible outcomes through our Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan and Indigenous Platform for Shared Benefits Realisation in Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.
- We also continue to look for innovative ways of improving our services. And while I could talk at length about the many achievements of the department, I will just mention a couple of awards we won recently:

- A 2022 Australian Good Design Award for the new Export Service digital tool
- A 2022 Commonwealth Procurement Awards for Excellence Gold Award for Building Entity Capability.
- I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge and thank my leadership team and departmental staff who continue to provide valuable services to the Australian community and our key stakeholders including farmers, importers and exporters and the many people they employ.
- I'm proud of our staff, who continue to display our core values of courage, excellence, diversity and working together, underpinned of course by safety and integrity.
- Thank you Chair. We are happy to respond to any questions from the Committee.

Andrew Metcalfe AO  
Secretary  
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry