Labor Senators' Dissenting Report

Rural Research and Development Legislation Amendment Bill 2014

1.1 Labor does not agree with recommendation 1, that the Senate pass Schedule 1 of the Bill in its current form.

1.2 With this amendment the Government is proposing a fundamental change to the current RDC partnership model which would allow the Government to recover the cost of membership fees to international commodity organisations and regional fisheries management organisations from the matching amounts paid to rural research and development corporations (RDCs). Labor recommends that the Government continues paying its own memberships fees for international commodity organisations.

1.3 Furthermore, the budget measure saving of $7 Million over four years is a longer tem budget measure. It will reduce genuine R&D investment each and every year as the measure does not cease to exist after the four year period.

1.4 If the Government is seeking to make a short term budget measure saving then it should provide a sunset clause in the Bill, so that it will return to the existing arrangement in four years.

1.5 Labor agrees with recommendation 2, that the Department of Agriculture liaise with RDCs prior to attending meetings of the relevant international commodity organisations and regional fisheries organisations and report back to the RDCs on meeting outcomes and the benefits derived from ongoing membership.

1.6 Labor notes its concern at the evidence provided during the Inquiry that the R&D and primary industry sectors are largely unfamiliar with the benefits derived from the Government's membership to international commodity organisations.

1.7 Labor does not agree with recommendation 3, that the Government monitor the impact of cost recovery requirement on the capacity of the Fisheries RDC to continue to support research and development within the fisheries industry.

1.8 This recommendation is redundant due to Labor not supporting recommendation 1.

Senator Glenn Sterle
Deputy Chair