

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

- Chair and Senators, thank you for the opportunity to make a short opening statement this morning.
- Just over a month ago we proudly marked one year since we came together as one department with a single purpose – Partnering and regulating to enhance Australia’s agriculture, unique environment and heritage, and water resources.
- It’s worthwhile reflecting on what we have achieved over the past 12 months – despite the unprecedented challenges – and we continue to grow as a stronger integrated organisation supporting Australia’s efforts to Care for our Country.
- This would not be possible without the incredibly hardworking diverse workforce of over 7000 employees across the country that I have the pleasure to lead. I would like to formally note with this committee my appreciation of their service to the Australian community during a very challenging time.
- Our frontline staff of biosecurity and export officers and veterinarians across the country have been instrumental in supporting COVID responses, such as facilitating the importation of our critical COVID vaccines, and working alongside industry to assist with workforce shortages, maintain export channels and keeping our economy going.
- Our National Parks workforce across the country are working closely with Traditional Owners to provide stewardship over our precious environmental and cultural assets within our six Commonwealth National Parks.
- Our Canberra workforce have in partnership with others delivered immediate action in the time of crisis – such as the

range the initiatives needed to support recovery from the Black Summer Bushfires through to long term societal transformation as is seen through the development of the nation's first National Plastics Plan and the implementation of the Ag2030 Strategy.

- And we can't forget our most southern based and remote workforce on Macquarie Island and in Antarctica, who are supported by our Tasmanian based workforce, are delivering world leading science which will help us to ensure our programs, policies and investment is based on the most relevant and robust scientific evidence.
- Over the course of today I am sure you will hear more about how we are continuing to enhance and modernise the way in which we deliver integrated outcomes for all Australians.
- Finally, I would also like to recognise the important role the ABC's Landline has played in helping to change Australian's perceptions of the agriculture sector as they celebrate 30 years of showcasing rural Australia.
- From documenting the changing role of women in agriculture, to sharing stories on Indigenous agriculture and land management practices through to showcasing emerging technologies to drive farmgate innovation they have provided a valuable service not only to rural Australia but to all Australians.