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7 April 2016

Mr Tom Watling
Committee Secretary
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee

Dear Mr Watling

The Sheepmeat Council of Australia (SCA) wishes to express its support for the *Primary Industries Levies and Charges Collection and Amendment Bill 2016*.

We understand the amendments to the *Primary Industries Levies and Charges Collection Act 1991* will allow levy-payer information, collected by the Australian Government, to be passed on to Research and Development Corporations and industry representative organisations in certain circumstances and for this information to be used only for specific purposes.

The introduction of this legislation is an important step in empowering industry representative organisations. Under the current red meat industry structure, SCA has a prescribed responsibility to represent all levy payers and oversight levy expenditure. This is a responsibility that we take very seriously and we have always strived to be the most effective and representative body possible. However, we are hamstrung in our ability to do this as we are currently unable to identify who the levy payers, the people we represent, actually are.

Once passed, these amendments will enable peak bodies such as SCA to identify the industry issues and priorities of the levy payers we represent through better engagement with them and therefore empower us to oversight levy expenditure more effectively.

An additional benefit of the proposed legislation is that it will create a more transparent voting process for Meat and Livestock Australia allowing voters an accurate understanding of their entitlements when undertaking an industry vote.

We fully support the Governments' proposed safeguards around this information such as the requirement for the Research and Development Corporations to establish a levy payer register and that access to information in that register is subject to approval by the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. We are of the firm belief that these measures will adequately protect the privacy of levy payers. We understand that this information is sensitive and that carte blanche access would be inappropriate.

Should members of the committee wish to discuss please do not hesitate to contact our CEO, Mr Mark Harvey-Sutton, on 02 6269 5610 or at mharveysutton@sheepmeatcouncil.com.au.

Yours sincerely

Jeff Murray
President