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Committee Secretary
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
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Via email: rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Chair

Inquiry into the provisions of the Biosecurity Amendment (Traveller Declarations and Other Measures) Bill 2020

Australian Pork Limited (APL) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the *Inquiry into the provisions of the Biosecurity Amendment (Traveller Declarations and Other Measures) Bill 2020* (“the Bill”). The pork industry strongly supports the Government’s focus on surveillance at the border as an important function of Australia’s biosecurity system.

APL is the peak national representative body for Australian pork producers. It is a producer-owned company combining marketing, export development, research and innovation and strategic policy development to assist in securing a profitable and sustainable future for the Australian pork industry. The pork industry employs more than 36,000 people nationally and contributes \$5.2 billion in gross domestic product.¹

Australian pork producers are currently threatened by the existence of African Swine Fever (ASF), which in less than a year, has decimated the global population of farmed pigs. The ability of this disease to destroy the livelihoods of Australian pork producers, and rural communities cannot be overstated. A study commissioned by APL last year confirmed this fear, showing estimates that the disease would cost the economy \$2.03 billion if established in Australia.²

APL urges the Government to accept and act on the recommendations in the report by the Inspector-General of Biosecurity on the adequacy of preventative border measures to mitigate the risk of ASF.³ These recommendations include practical measures, in addition to funding changes and structural adjustments in border operations, such as:

- an increase of interventions on flights, especially from ASF infected countries;
- an increase in the numbers of detector dogs at major ports;
- an increase in social-media awareness campaigns directed at high risk countries; and
- direct messaging to passengers via mobile phone alerts to incoming passengers.

¹ ACILAllen Consulting, ‘Economic Contribution Report: Pork Industry in Australia - 2015-16’, November 2017, http://australianpork.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ACILAllen_PorkIndustryEconomicImpactReport_Final_17Nov2017_corrected.pdf

² ACILAllen Consulting, ‘Economic Analysis of African Swine Fever Incursion into Australia’, August 2019, <http://australianpork.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/African-Swine-Fever-Final-Report-140819.pdf>

³ Inspector-General of Biosecurity 2020, *Adequacy of preventative border measures to mitigate the risk of African swine fever*, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Canberra, March. https://www.igb.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/asf-review-report_1.pdf

APL acknowledges that a robust biosecurity system is a public good and provides national and international benefits. APL is therefore supportive of the Government's decision to issue infringement notices with increasing penalties based on the risk of the biosecurity material, noting that an effective infringement system must constantly evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions. A combination of penalties, as well as notifications on airlines/vessels, and at check in, would greatly assist in reducing the volume of biosecurity risks arriving at, and potentially passing through, Australian ports and airports. APL urges the government to look at all options to prevent biosecurity risk, and continually monitor their effectiveness in doing so.

Furthermore, APL recommends that the Government allocate funds received via the increased penalties to testing and surveillance for animal diseases at the border. It has been well cited that a well-protected agricultural sector requires a program of biosecurity surveillance that is ongoing, rigorous, and applies to regulated and unregulated pathways.

Lastly, APL was disappointed that the Government did not agree to a container levy as a means to fund sustainable biosecurity at the border, particularly as the restriction of travel due to COVID-19 will mean fewer penalties and a reduced income stream over the 2019-20 and 2020-21 financial years. Despite this, APL urges the Government to maintain adequate funding to ensure the system can continue to protect Australian agriculture.

APL would be happy to discuss any of the comments provided in this submission.

Yours sincerely

Margo Andrae
Chief Executive Officer