



TASMANIAN FARMERS & GRAZIERS ASSOCIATION

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

TFGA Submission – Senate Inquiry into Primary Industries Levies and Charges Collection Amendment Bill.

The Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA) is the leading representative body for Tasmanian primary producers. TFGA members are responsible for generating approximately 80% of the value created by the Tasmanian agricultural sector.

The total Tasmanian gross state product was \$23.9 billion for the 2012 year. The GVP of agriculture, forestry and fishing collectively amounted to almost 9% of this total – before input supply services and value-adding, which is well above that for the nation as a whole.

The TFGA recognises the important contribution to Australia, and more specifically Tasmania, that Rural Development Corporations (RDCs) make to our health, welfare and economy. These contributions are a tangible benefit for both producers and consumers alike. The Australian levy system is the envy of our global competitors, as it strengthens our industry and allow the sector flexibility and growth, which may otherwise not exist in the global market place.

The proposed changes will improve the current levy structure, and will only stand to improve a system that already works. Giving RDCs access to producer information will increase the ability of these bodies to distribute information in a more efficient and effective manner. Producers pay a compulsory levy towards obtaining relevant R&D information and have the right to use and to access it in a timely fashion.

RDCs having producer information will have biosecurity benefits for both the government and the agricultural sector. Having the ability to distribute relevant information in time of animal or plant disease outbreak or system breakdown (e.g. NLIS), would be an invaluable for all involved in the agricultural sector. This improved system could be considered a failsafe at a base level, allowing the most poignant information to be distributed to the producers where and when it is needed.

RDCs relying on organisations like the TFGA for membership contacts to distribute information and organise events, this is both inefficient and largely ineffective on a larger scale, while this benefits TFGA members, the wider community and industry, without their own considered effort may miss out. There is precedent of RDCs having this information to no ill effect (e.g. Australian Wool Innovation).

The TFGA is supportive of an amendment that would improve information sharing between RDCs and producers and would consider this a positive step forward for the Australian and Tasmanian agricultural sector.

Please contact the TFGA if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

Peter Skillern
Chief Executive Officer
8th April 2016