



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



**Andrew Metcalfe AO
SECRETARY**

Ref: EXEC2013-01801

17 June 2013

Senator the Hon. Bill Heffernan
Chair
Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Heffernan

Thank you for your letter of 13 June 2013 inviting the department to meet with Mr Peace as part of the committee's work in relation to my department's risk assessment methodologies.

Officers from my department have been in discussion with the committee secretariat regarding the proposed meeting with Mr Peace and I understand that the meeting will now proceed on 3 July 2013 in Sydney.

To ensure that this meeting provides the most value to the committee, I would also propose that the other parties who have provided technical input to the committee about Australia's risk method be included; namely the Eminent Scientists Group and the Australian Centre of Excellence for Risk Analysis. As I have stated previously, these groups include highly qualified practitioners that are available to and work with the department on risk assessment and I believe that they will be of assistance to the committee's ongoing considerations.

In your letter you also advised me that the committee was seeking to extend its reporting date to 19 July 2013 and asked me that all decisions in relation to the importation of pineapples from Malaysia, ginger from Fiji and potatoes for processing from New Zealand be delayed until that time.

In my letter of 22 May 2013, I stated that the department had published final import risk analysis reports for both pineapples from Malaysia and ginger from Fiji and would commence engagement with the exporting countries to develop operational requirements and undertake audits of their respective phytosanitary systems. A key part of this process includes the development of a 'work plan' to the department's satisfaction.

The department will continue to work with Malaysia and Fiji to review any proposed work plan. It is very unlikely that all operational requirements will be completed by 19 July 2013 to

allow imports of pineapple from Malaysia and ginger from Fiji, in the event that import permits are sought.

With regard to the review of import conditions for fresh potatoes for processing from New Zealand, the department is continuing its assessment of the issues raised in the submissions, and the latest scientific information, relevant to developing a final report. Again, it is very unlikely that there would be substantial progress prior to 19 July 2013.

I hope that this information is of assistance to your committee.

Yours sincerely

(Andrew Metcalfe)