



Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture
and Water Resources**

SECRETARY

Ref: EC15-000801

Senator Cory Bernardi
Chair
Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Attention: Ms Lyn Beverley, Secretary

Dear Senator Bernardi

Inquiry into the Omnibus Repeal Day (Spring 2015) Bill 2015

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the parliamentary inquiry into the Omnibus Repeal Day (Spring 2015) Bill 2015 (the Bill). I write to you in support of the measures put forward by the Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio within the Bill.

The Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio is one of 14 portfolios across the Commonwealth to contribute measures to the Bill which amends or repeals legislation to facilitate the reduction of regulatory burden.

The Senate Standing Committee for Selection of Bills has referred particular parts of the Bill for further consideration. The proposed repeal of the *Rural Adjustment Act 1992* (the RA Act), the responsibility for which falls within this portfolio, is one of those measures referred for further consideration.

As outlined in the Explanatory Memorandum to the Bill, the provisions of the RA Act have been superseded by new reforms and the advisory functions established under the RA Act are now proposed to be undertaken by other bodies.

The RA Act contains obsolete provisions relating to the Rural Adjustment Scheme and the Farm Business Improvement Program. The Rural Adjustment Scheme ceased in 1997 and funding for the Farm Business Improvement Program ceased on 29 February 2008. The programs were superseded by new reforms for drought support as part of the *Intergovernmental Agreement on National Drought Program Reform* (agreed on 3 May 2013).

The RA Act also established the National Rural Advisory Council (NRAC). NRAC was initially established as a statutory body in December 1999 as a skills-based independent advisory council. The function of NRAC is to give the Minister such advice and information as the Minister requests. This could include specific issues in relation to rural adjustment and regional issues or any other matter on which the Minister requests advice on.

On 15 December 2014, the Government announced that as part of the Australian Government's Smaller Government Reforms NRAC would merge with the Agricultural Industry Advisory Council (AIAC). AIAC is a non-statutory body which provides the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources with information, advice and recommendations on contemporary issues affecting Australia's agricultural, fishing and forestry sectors.

The membership of the AIAC contains a broad cross-section of industry and stakeholder representatives who are well placed to do work that previously may have been asked of NRAC. The merging of NRAC and the AIAC reduces duplication yet maintains the quality of information and advice provided to the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources on issues affecting the portfolio.

Yours sincerely

Daryl Quinlivan

16 December 2015