

Submission to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee

Senate inquiry into Bio-security and Quarantine Arrangements

Shipping Australia is a peak industry body which has 39 full shipping company and shipping agency members as well as 45 corporate associate members which essentially provide services to the maritime industry (refer to attachment A for a list of that membership). The full members of Shipping Australia are involved in a majority of the 26,000 port ship calls in Australia each year and are vitally interested in quarantine arrangements. SAL covers all types of shipping and would be involved with over 80 percent of Australia's container, car trade and cruise industry as well as over 50 percent of Australia's bulk and break-bulk industries.

Shipping Australia was formed in 2001 as the result of a merger between the Australian Chamber of Shipping and Liner Shipping Services Limited. The latter representing international liner operators that have arrangements registered under Part X of the Australian Trade Practices Act.

The Australian Chamber of Shipping and subsequently SAL have been members of the AQIS Industry Cargo Consultative Committee (AICCC) since 1993 and also a member of the executive of the Industry Working Group on Quarantine (IWGQ). SAL was involved in the preparation of and fully supports the initial submission by the IWGQ. SAL is also party to the joint industry submission from Ports Australia and the Australian Shipowners Association regarding a national system for the prevention and management of marine pest incursions as well as difficulties being experienced regarding the establishment of guidelines for the management of bio-hull fouling in Australia.

SAL has been closely involved in the development of the ballast water management arrangements in Australia as well as the development of the guidelines for bio-hull fouling.

We will not repeat in this submission our concerns regarding the relatively slow progress regarding the implementation of the recommendations from the Beale inquiry although we fully appreciate the number of valid reasons why that has not progressed as efficiently as stakeholders and we are sure AQIS would have wished. We also continue to advocate much greater transparency of cost recovery arrangements as set out in the IWGQ submission.

In this initial submission, we would like to bring the attention of the committee to some issues of specific relevance to members. SAL has always been keen on the mitigation of threats offshore and co-regulation arrangements. SAL commends AQIS and the Government for the development of many of these effective offshore mitigation arrangements such as the eradication of seeds from motor vehicles from Thailand and Japan, cleaning of machinery prior to arrival in Australia and the review of the countries that suffer from Giant African Snail infestations although we would like to see that list reviewed again.

We also commend AQIS and the Government for the development of the electronic quarantine pratique arrival report which has been successfully introduced as SAL is in favour of increasing the level of electronic transmission of documents. Looking to the future we foresee the development of more intermodal terminals or inland ports which will require the presence of AQIS as well as AQIS being satisfied with the arrangements for the transfer of goods to and from those intermodal terminals and inland ports.

The level of AQIS staff resources has been a problem from time to time but at existing levels of demand, it is not considered to be a systemic problem.

Waste handling and disposal is an important issue currently being addressed by the International Plant Protection Convention and SAL not only supports the adoption of international standards in Australia as far as possible but believes a consistent national approach for waste handling and disposal is essential.

AICCC is primarily concerned with the quarantine import programme. In relation to the export trade a long standing issue that SAL has had with AQIS is the inspection of grain ships that come to load in Australia. Many years ago these ships were inspected at anchor which certainly facilitated their loading and dispatch but for OH&S reasons AQIS withdrew that facility and they will only inspect grain ships at the boarding berth. SAL believes the system of co-regulation arrangements with marine surveyors could again facilitate this trade because if a ship has arrived for loading but fails inspection, then it has to vacate the berth for cleaning which considerably holds up the process given that the grain for loading is already in silos beside the loading berth. This issue will continue to be pursued with AQIS.

Finally, SAL is very supportive of risk based assessment to ensure that most of AQIS resources are directed at the high risk areas which would clearly deliver more successful quarantine outcomes for the Australian community. Part of this process has been clearing some low risk vessels by documents rather than by actual inspection as far as pratique is concerned and Shipping Australia would like to work further with AQIS in the development of that risk based assessment process.