

15 September 2000

Hon A P Thompson MP
Chairman of JSCOT
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Thompson,

Re: Australia's relationship with the WTO

The Victorian Farmers Federation is a member of the National Farmers' Federation and wishes to add our support for the submission prepared by the NFF.

With over 16 000 members we represent the majority of Victorian farmers and trade reform is of vital interest to them, their families and the communities they live in.

Globalisation and the alleged evils of the WTO have had some particular focus in Melbourne this week as people express their concern over the impact of globalisation and what many see as the power of the World Trade Organisation and multinationals. Whilst the VFF fully support the right of every person to express their view, we are concerned that the blockade did prevent many people from attending a forum where they could discuss and express a view.

The World Trade Organisation is not perfect and the path Australia treads to trade liberalisation is not easy, but we must stay engaged and keep working to achieve a better deal for Australian farmers and exporters.

It is not in the best interests of the farmers of Victoria for the WTO to be used as a forum to solve environmental, social or labour problems. The Australian Government needs to work hard to keep non-trade concerns out of trade agreements.

We have a long way to go before agriculture is treated the same as other trade at the WTO and the VFF believes that the Australian Government must maintain pressure to achieve multilateral liberalisation of agricultural trade.

Yours faithfully,

Peter Walsh
President
Victorian Farmers Federation