

Mr Bob Charles MP
Chairman
Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Charles

I refer to the Review of Australia's Quarantine Function by the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit (JCPAA).

I would like to provide the following information and comments as an addition to Tasmania's submission of 6 November 2001 to the JCPAA based on advice I have received from the Secretary of the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment.

The Primary Industries Ministerial Council Meeting (PIMC) Number 1 of 2 May 2002 in Hobart reached agreement on some of the issues raised as areas of concern by the Tasmanian government in its original submission of 6 November 2001 to the inquiry.

The PIMC agreed to the following propositions at the meeting:

- Paragraph 24 (b) (ii) - "SPS measures applied to an international or domestic import into a region should be consistent with the associated risk and pest status of the region. Any variation of those import measures between regions/states would need to be based on a scientific analysis of quarantine risk and be supported by domestic movement controls;"
- Paragraph 24 (b) (iii) - "there are significant impediments to imposing supervised region/inter-state movement controls in areas without natural barriers." (*however*) "Geographic barriers allow for supervised movement controls to be put in place for Western Australia and Tasmania but for the rest of Australia, supervised movement controls are more difficult to develop and implement, *although there are some successful examples* eg the tri-state fruit fly exclusion zone;
- Paragraph 24 (b) (iv) - "the Commonwealth is *committed to addressing regional differences* in pest status and risk and consequent SPS measures as part of import risk analysis;"
- Paragraph 24 (b) (vi) - "the MOU adequately defines the obligations of Commonwealth/states/territories under (the) SPS agreement. The MOU does not define the recently developed *partnership approach*. The MOU should be

augmented by an exchange of letters between Ministers to reflect the mutual obligations under the agreed partnership approach.” (my italics)

The agreement by the PIMC to the above first three propositions addresses the issues raised in the section entitled “*Risk Management and Regional Conditions*” in the Tasmanian government’s original submission of 6 November 2001 to the inquiry, where Tasmania argues for the adaptation of quarantine measures to regional conditions in respect of commodities and pest and disease risks having significant regional differences in distribution.

The agreement by the PIMC to the fourth proposition above, in response to the Primary Industries Standing Committee CEO’s Working Group on Quarantine agreement to address differences in import risk analysis through early and comprehensive cooperation, gives a degree of confidence that consultation between the States/Territories and the Commonwealth will now occur at all stages of the import risk analysis process.

The need to acknowledge regional differences in pest status and bio-security risks was a key point of disagreement between this State and the Commonwealth over allowing raw Canadian salmon imports into Tasmania.

These decisions by the PIMC mean that regional differences in risk can be addressed by the application of differing measures in specific regions and, along with the agreed partnership approach involving early and comprehensive cooperation during the import risk analysis process, should facilitate the process for commodities where regional differences in risk exist.

Yours sincerely

Jim Bacon MHA
Premier