

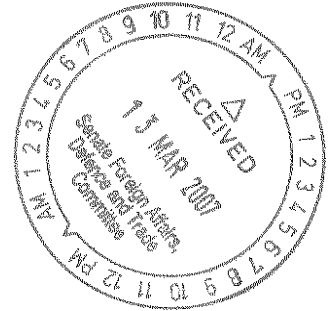


Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

13 March 2007

The Secretary
Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee
Suite S1.57
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Secretary

SUBMISSION: Senate Inquiry into the nature and conduct of Australia's public diplomacy

Thank you for this opportunity to provide a submission to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee's inquiry.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia (DAFF) works closely with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to advance Australian interests overseas. To ensure a whole-of-government approach to international public diplomacy measures, DAFF contributes to a number of relevant interdepartmental committees (IDCs) including the DFAT-led *Images of Australia* IDC; and an AQIS-led IDC of public affairs staff who communicate Australian border entry requirements to overseas audiences (eg quarantine, customs, immigration).

The Department's international public diplomacy objectives fall under three main categories:

Market access and reputation—informing and influencing Australia's trade partners to the benefit of Australian agriculture, fisheries, forestry and food.

Biosecurity—ensuring travellers and people sending goods to Australia are aware of, and comply with, our strict quarantine rules.

Emergency preparedness—being ready to effectively communicate to overseas audiences in the event of an Australian agricultural disease outbreak.

Market access and reputation

In collaboration with DFAT, DAFF works to secure, protect and expand access to markets for Australian agriculture, fisheries, forestry and food products. Work is coordinated by the department's International Division with input from various areas. Offshore support is provided by a team of 15 agricultural officers based at Australian missions in key overseas markets. Work includes:

- contributing to the Australian Government's negotiation of free trade agreements and multilateral trade agreements;
- negotiating with overseas governments to address specific market access issues (eg quarantine, food safety, animal welfare), both via ongoing forums (eg the Australia-Indonesia working group on agriculture and food cooperation) and on a case-by-case basis;

- supporting overseas posts—for example, through briefings and talking points—should an issue arise that could cause foreign markets to question the safety or integrity of Australian produce; and
- administering programmes and grants designed to build the agricultural trade and quarantine capacity of developing countries that are also Australian trading partners.

Biosecurity

The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS), an agency within DAFF, communicates with overseas travellers and other offshore audiences to inform them of Australian quarantine laws:

- quarantine brochures in 15 languages are distributed through channels including travel agencies, international student networks, the web and Australian embassies;
- quarantine information is provided in 15 languages at www.aqis.gov.au as well as on country-specific websites set up by Australian embassies;
- quarantine messages are developed and required, under Australian law, to be broadcast on all international airlines and cruise lines into Australia;
- prominent messages are displayed at international arrival terminals; and
- ethnic media in Australia are targeted—including via a network of foreign-language-speaking AQIS staff—to encourage Australians to inform visiting friends and relatives about our quarantine rules.

Biosecurity Australia, an independent agency within the DAFF portfolio, undertakes risk assessments and provides policy advice, with a view to managing the risk to Australia from exotic pests and diseases related to proposed imports. A key part of these risk assessments involves consulting with stakeholders about the associated risks.

Emergency preparedness

DAFF has trained 300 officers, including officers from DFAT, to undertake a public relations role in the event of a major Australian animal disease emergency, such as a foot and mouth disease outbreak. A senior communications group—with chairs from DFAT, DAFF and other relevant agencies—has been set up to advise a National Management Group in the event of such an emergency. This group would devise a strategic response in the event of an outbreak, considering the needs of all stakeholders including overseas audiences. One major tool at this group's disposal is the www.outbreak.gov.au website, which in the event of a major disease outbreak would provide relevant information to trading partners.

More detail can be provided on activities outlined in this submission, or any other DAFF activity which the committee considers is relevant to the inquiry. If we can be of further assistance, please contact Ms Nicola Hinder, General Manager, Parliamentary and Media, on 6272 5590.

Yours sincerely


Peter Yule
Deputy Secretary