

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

5.1 The Committee notes that since it commenced this inquiry a number of administrative developments have been instituted that are designed to address some of the concerns raised during the inquiry. However, some of the concerns remain.

Risk Assessment and Mitigation strategies

5.2 The concerns that arise from the methodology and risk assessment, together with the proposed risk mitigation strategies continue. The Committee focused its attention when examining the risk assessment and mitigation strategies on the disease of fire blight.

5.3 If the revised model is to continue to base its assessment of risk on the assumption that apples will be exported trash free from New Zealand then the certification process needs to be carefully re-examined so that Australian growers can have confidence in the assurances that the trash free criteria will be met.

5.4 Further, the Committee shares the growers concern that the model does not give appropriate weight to the economic consequences of a fire blight outbreak in Australia. It recommends that it be reviewed in the revision that is to take place.

5.5 Finally, the Committee continues to be concerned about the practicality of some of the risk mitigation strategies. It is in these that science meets the real world of farming and retail and it is therefore important that the merger is satisfactory. The Committee is therefore concerned that the procedure to identify blocks of orchards as symptomless for fire blight lacks detail.

Administration of process

5.6 The Committee acknowledges industry's concerns in relation to Biosecurity Australia's administration of the IRA process, and in fact shares some of those concerns.

5.7 The Committee has particular concerns in relation to the credibility of the process and the credibility of Biosecurity Australia itself – both from the perspective of the industry and those observing the IRA process.

5.8 Significant differences exist between the way in which Biosecurity Australia views its administration of the process and how its role is perceived by the industry, and the Committee believes that it is up to Biosecurity Australia to address those differences. Changes need to be made in relation to the type of language used, the way

in which consultation is undertaken and the way in which information is disseminated. The Committee has made a number of recommendations to give effect to these views.

5.9 The Committee believes that important lessons should be learned from mistakes made during this and previous processes, and in future, it will be looking for demonstrable evidence that these lessons have been learned, changes made and acted upon.

Senator the Hon. Bill Heffernan

Chair