

## **Additional Comments by Government Senators**

1.1 Government Senators note the recommendations and make the following comments.

1.2 With regard to the veracity of risk management measures, the Import Risk Analysis (IRA) has already been subject to considerable and detailed scrutiny – through a process initiated by the former Coalition Government in 2000, and within guidelines and processes for IRAs set down by the former Coalition Government.

1.3 It is worth noting that on 3 July 2000, the then Minister, the Hon. Warren Truss, MP, stated that the IRA would allow for "careful scientific assessment of quarantine risks as well as opportunities for widespread consultation with all stakeholders." On 28 March 2002, Minister Truss further stated that the IRA would be a "rigorous one based solely on sound science" and that "neither threats of trade retaliation by the Philippines or publicity campaigns by the Australian industry will be taken into account in the decision".

1.4 Australia's Director of Animal and Plant Quarantine, in making the policy determination, has established a rigorous quarantine framework for the importation of bananas from the Philippines, consistent with Australia's conservative approach to quarantine. Biosecurity Australia has stated that bananas from the Philippines will only be approved for importation to Australia if the Philippines can demonstrate that they can implement Australia's required quarantine measures. These measures are designed to limit the risk of pest and disease entry to a very low level, consistent with Australia's appropriate level of protection. Biosecurity Australia has advised that the Philippines will be required to demonstrate to Australia's satisfaction that the risk management measures set out in the policy determination can be achieved under commercial conditions on an ongoing basis before any trade can commence.

1.5 With regard to notification of import permit applications, if an application for a permit was made to import from a foreign country, Biosecurity Australia has made it clear that it intends to inform industry of such an application being made, provided there are no commercial-in-confidence sensitivities.

1.6 With regard to ongoing reviews of the IRA once trade has commenced, Biosecurity Australia is always monitoring the pest and disease status of an exporting country and will adjust import conditions as appropriate, as it has done in the past.

1.7 It is also worth noting the government of the Philippines has reportedly described Australia's quarantine policy as "very stringent, expensive and trade restrictive", claiming it will delay any exports.

1.8 As of writing, there has been no indication that a permit application to commence trade is forthcoming.

**Senator G. Sterle**  
**Senator for Western Australia**

**Senator K. O'Brien**  
**Senator for Tasmania**