

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Terms of reference

1.1 On 19 September 2007, the Senate referred the following matter to the Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport for inquiry and report by 30 June 2008:

- (i) the scientific evidence available on the likely future climate of Australia's key agricultural production zones, and its implications for current farm enterprises and possible future industries;
- (ii) the need for a national strategy to assist Australian agricultural industries to adapt to climate change; and
- (iii) the adequacy of existing drought assistance and exceptional circumstances programs to cope with long-term climatic changes.

1.2 On 14 February 2008, the Senate re-adopted the Inquiry with the terms of reference unchanged and with a reporting date of 4 September 2008. On 4 September 2008, the committee tabled an interim report, and indicated that a final report would be tabled on 4 December 2008.

### Conduct of the Inquiry

1.3 The Inquiry was advertised in *The Australian* and through the Internet. The committee invited submissions from a wide range of interested organisations, government departments and authorities and individuals. The committee continued to accept submissions throughout the Inquiry.

1.4 The committee received 42 submissions. A list of individuals and organisations that made public submissions to the Inquiry together with other information authorised for publication is set out in Appendix 1. The committee held two public hearings in Canberra on 30 June and 1 July 2008. A list of the witnesses who gave evidence at the public hearings is set out in Appendix 2.

1.5 The committee also formed two subcommittees to undertake site visits to the Binu district in Western Australia, and Warren in NSW. On 19 August 2008, a subcommittee visited the Binu district of Western Australia for a site visit to 'Pine Crest', the farm of Murray, Jenny and Kyle Carson, which is being used to develop grazing and cropping systems using sub-tropical perennial grasses. On 12 September 2008, a subcommittee also visited 'Jedburgh' in Warren, NSW the property of Scott and Jo McCalman to see the work that is being done there in conjunction with the Australian Soil Carbon Accreditation Scheme. The committee accepted reports from the subcommittee, and has referred to these reports during its deliberations in the Inquiry.

## **The committee's final report**

1.6 The committee's final report addresses two aspects of the Inquiry's terms of reference:

- the implications of Australia's likely future climate for current farm enterprises and possible future industries; and
- the need for a national strategy to assist Australian agricultural industries to adapt to climate change.

1.7 Chapter 2 of this report looks at the climatic implications of climate change for the Australian agricultural sector. Chapter 3 discusses some of the risks and opportunities that climate change presents to current and future farm industries. Chapter 4 of the report discusses some implications for the Australian agricultural sector arising from a proposed emissions trading scheme. Chapter 5 discusses the need for a national strategy to assist agricultural industries to adapt to climate change.

## **Acknowledgement**

1.8 The committee thanks those organisations and individuals who made submissions and gave evidence at the public hearings. The committee would like to express its appreciation and thanks to those involved with the site visits: Murray, Jenny and Kyle Carson; Tim Wiley; Bob Wilson; Mike Bowley, Sam Harburg, Rob Grima and the staff at the Northern Agricultural Region of the Western Australian Department of Agriculture and Food; Chris King and Jane Bradley of the Northern Agriculture Catchment Council; Neil and Eve Eastough, Jim Wedge, Dale and Bruce Wynn, Don Nairn and Rowan Ford of the Northern Agri Group; Scott and Jo McCalman, Christine Jones, Rex Wilson and Ashley Wielinga.

## **Note on references**

1.9 References in this report are to individual submissions as received by the committee, not to a bound volume.