

SUBMISSION TO SENATE INQUIRY – NEW WHEAT EXPORT LEGISLATION

Firstly, I wish to complain to your Committee as representatives of the government, that **there has been a severe lack of publicity** in the rural press and local radio about the proposed changes to New Wheat Bill released by Mr Burke recently.

I first heard that the New Bill was expected to be released around the 20th March, so rang Mr Burke's office on the 21st and was told it was released and I could download from the internet. However when told it was 70 pages I asked for it to be posted to us as our computer was very slow. This was done but did not arrive until 26th (after Easter). After taking a couple of days to read and digest it, I have only a very short time now to comment. This New Bill will mean life changes to our business so believe I should have at least 3 weeks to make comment ..from the time I received the Bill.

THERE IS NOT ENOUGH TIME for such an important issue – **OUR WHEAT INDUSTRY!** Already the deadline for the IEG has closed and your inquiry closes on 4th April your Staff have told me.

Mr Burke has told me your committee would hold a number of public hearings in wheat growing regions, but if you have, we have not heard about it ! The government needs to consult with the **GRASSROOT GROWERS** not the Directors of GCA, NFF or GGA. The Directors of GGA **are putting their personal views to the Inquiry not OURS.** The Chairman of the Grain Growers Association is also a Director of Graincorp one of the big traders, so he has a conflict of interest. (one foot in each camp!) I hope the Government is not taking comments from him or his directors! **GGA have a Committee of Advice, but Directors are ignoring/not taking their advice!!**

I am writing this submission on behalf of my working family farm and other working family farms in this area who have said .. they have not got time to read the Bill, or time to write, because there is **not enough time to comment.** All previous letters, surveys, polls they have taken part in to Retain a Single Exporter have been **COMPLETELY IGNORED** by the decision makers, so they will not waste any more valuable time !! Many of these farming families are at the end of their tether, like we are having to continually defend retention of a Single Exporter !...after 6 years of drought, the anxiety, stress and financial worry that has been put on these families, are tearing them apart, and this latest Bill is just another “kick in the guts” we do not need. Every which way we turn, there is another regulation being forced down our throat! Without a Single Exporter for our wheat, we will be sold down the gurgler to the multinationals, who are majority owned by overseas companies!! **I implore the government to listen to the silent majority(75%)of Australian wheatgrowers (not the traders) who want a SINGLE exporter.**

This new legislation has many flaws in its present form and I will try and list some of them below.

1. With multi exporters, grower will be pitted against grower, screwing us down to the lowest dollar.

2. If no National Pool, who will buy and store the excess grain from the good years, and what price? Buyers will “pick” what THEY WANT & at their PRICE and leave the lower grade wheat. Farmers will have to pay excessive fees to store with traders, or build their own storage..great expense that they cannot afford. When we had the National Pool, lower grade wheat could be blended with higher grade wheat to maximize the return to the grower. This cannot happen in the “New “ system, as it will be sold to port ASAP, causing chaos at port, as the system will not be able to handle that amount of grain all at once. The rail & road system is in a terrible state and will not be able to move the grain on time. There will be chaos with shipping with ships jostling for positions.

3. With no Single Exporter, traders **will not** be obligated to post a price for growers benefit, as happened in SA in 2007 barley harvest traders did not list a price til halfway

through harvest!! How fair is that to the grower? The Bill says ACCC will have investigative powers to prosecute those found guilty of collusion. This is a toothless tiger..How will they be able to find out ? The Bill has not stated what the penalty will be?.

4.Loss of Golden Rewards means farmers will be sent back to “cliff face pricing,” reducing growers income. There will be no quality controls if Golden Rewards Quality Assurance is lost. Who will handle and pay for shipments delayed because of quality concerns? No opportunity to keep Australian wheat brand value. We will lose the Clean & Green image for Australian wheat. Multinationals will have no incentive to keep Australian wheat separate from wheat they buy from other countries, which will not have the quality controls our industry has.

5. Growers will have no financial security at point of sale, or after. How does the grower keep ownership until payment is made? The government will have to guarantee payment to the grower if the trader falls over.

6. There is no classification system put in place that growers can **TRUST** and **RELY** upon.

7 There is no protection in the Bill to stop Australian wheat competing against Australian wheat in overseas marketing, again the grower is the loser !!

8. No group or body will put growers first!!(Without our grain they are nothing).

9 Domestic grain users will find volatility in prices, National Pool gave them and us stability and security.

10. More pressure will be on growers to do own hedging and marketing. This was previously done mostly by National Pool operator and was able to spread risk over the whole industry.

11.Lastly and most importantly farming families and associated businesses in rural areas will fall apart, as big corporate farms move in and take out the family business at nominal cost, as we will be on our knees. They will buy their goods outside these communities. These families will be forced to move to cities placing more problems there.

I have noticed Peter Woods CEO of EWC told the inquiry “that the new bill only covers Port facilities BUT does not cover regional storage and handling facilities where growers deliver their wheat”... This is what farmers have been saying, but the Minister is not listening.

The majority of graingrowers would like to see **the WEMA MODEL taken up by Government.** Mr Blight had it ready to go as requested by previous government by 1st March 2008,but this government is hell bent on taking us down the path of deregulation and destruction of a system that has served our industry so well. All the infrastructure of a Single Exporting system is still there, yet Mr Burke wants to throw it all away and make us pay for a deregulated system that we do not want. but our grassroots have not been consulted!! All to save Labor’s election promise... to deregulate”. I do not believe Politicians should make these rash decisions at election time ...without consideration of the people it affects!!((working farming families livelihood in this case)

I understand this Senate Committee knows very little about graingrowing, but hope I have been able to help you understand our plight and what devastation and community destruction this Wheat Bill will have on us all, if approved.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marion Billing