

## **Additional Comments from Senator Glenn Sterle**

1.1 There is no doubt that there remains concern amongst some export certification users about the move to new cost recovery arrangements, in particular for horticulture exporters and some exporters of meat products.

1.2 Some of the evidence in this report is superseded by agreements between the Minister and export user groups.

1.3 For example:

- the Minister announced an agreement with the Australian Meat Industry Council on 5 September 2011 “Gillard Government supports regional meat processing jobs”. The Coalition also announced its agreement to this arrangement on 14 September 2011 “Coalition stands by meat industry to the tune of \$25.8million” (14 September 2011) and again on 19 September 2011 in the House of Representatives (Main Committee) Hansard:

Mr Tehan: Those on the other side may laugh, but I would like to highlight that the coalition has once again played a very constructive and positive role in producing an outcome, in this instance, for the meat industry. I would like to especially recognise the member for Calare for the role that he has played in bringing about this positive outcome.

- On 23 September, the Minister announced new arrangements for the Grains exporters “Government reforms to improve wheat export marketing arrangements”.
- On 26 October the Minister announced the trial of AQIS Authorised Officers for citrus exporters and the department gave evidence that that trial was being extended to the mango and table grape sectors over the summer.

1.4 In addition to this progress between the hearings of this inquiry, I also note that since the committee hearing on 29 November 2011, regulations have been made and registered on the Federal Register of Legislative Instruments that will implement the Minister’s agreement with the Grains Ministerial Task Force and set the framework for implementing an arrangement with the Seafood Ministerial Task Force.

1.5 These developments indicate that the Minister and his department are committed to working with industries on improving service delivery and achieving efficiency. They also indicate that the Government and industry progress on these issues is happening in real time – with progress before and after the hearings.

1.6 The Minister’s correspondence to the Australian Horticulture Exporters Association of 5 December 2011 and copied to this inquiry noted that the “Government has demonstrated its willingness to support the process and the industries going through transition”.

1.7 I also note witness statements, cited in this report about a Government undertaking to commission a report into the “legitimate costs of government”. Correspondence tabled in this inquiry from the then Minister (Burke) refers to a research project which is now published on the department’s website.

***On the recommendations:***

1.8 The evidence presented to the committee from those involved in the process indicates that AQIS can do better in its engagement with export user groups. I broadly support the recommendations as they are relevant to the AQIS consultation framework but note the disparity between the results achieved by different export commodity groups in their interaction with essentially the same personnel that warrants further consideration by AQIS and industry alike.

1.9 I do not support Recommendation 3. It is not appropriate to use a “one size fits all” approach for multiple certifications. The Government has already shown that it is committed to working with industries regarding the costs of Health and Halal Certificates.

1.10 I do not support Recommendation 4 (retaining the 40% rebate for AQIS export certification functions). Retaining the 40% rebate in perpetuity will not provide a driver for an agreed reform position. As indicated by the Minister’s correspondence, copied to this inquiry, the Government has demonstrated its willingness to provide transitional assistance where reforms are agreed. Evidence provided by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry indicating that the Government is considering further assistance to the smaller meat processors confirms the Minister’s position.

**Senator Glenn Sterle  
Deputy Chair  
Australian Labor Party**