

Dissenting Report by Government Senators

1.1 The Government Senators disagree with several of the recommendations found in the majority report.

1.2 The Government Senators note that a number of the findings in the majority report appear to be generated from correspondence and discussions held directly between Coalition members and stakeholders rather than from evidence presented to the committee. Such findings should not be presented as outcomes of committee process.

1.3 The Government Senators acknowledge there are a range of pressures facing Australian exporters, including food exporters. In this context the Government Senators reject the majority view that AQIS fees and charges will make Australian businesses uncompetitive. The Government is committed to continued consultations with the industry that will lead to a removal of red tape, support regional jobs and improve Australia's competitiveness.

1.4 The Government Senators reject the majority view that the Government is using a 'take it or leave it' approach in regards to negotiations with stakeholders. The evidence brought before the committee does not reflect this.

1.5 The Government Senators note the contradictory nature of the committee view in the majority report which criticises the Government for its lack of consultation with stakeholders and its alleged "*take it or leave it approach*" at the same time it criticises the government for the time and resources taken to carry out these negotiations.

1.6 The Government Senators do not agree with the committee view that the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has had insufficient funding to carry out its reforms and negotiations with stakeholders.

1.7 In relation to Recommendation 1, Government Senators note the following:

- the recommendation is not consistent with that of the Beale Review;
- the Coalition should specify whether this recommendation is consistent with its stated support of the Beale Review;
- that the *Import Risk Analysis* appeals process was first outlined in the *Import Risk Analysis Handbook* published by the Howard Government in 2000;
- the Handbook takes account of reforms to the import risk analysis process announced by the Australian Government in October 2006 and implemented in 2007;
- that the document has not had any significant amendments since this date; and

- the Coalition's recommendations appear based on correspondence between Coalition members and industry stakeholders rather than evidence presented to the committee.

1.8 In relation to Recommendation 2, Government Senators note the following:

- the Government continues to implement a staged and responsible approach to reform;
- the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is continuing discussions with the industry and stakeholders regarding the recommendations of the Beale Review and other reforms;
- the Government agreed in-principle to implement the recommendations of the Beale Review, yet the Coalition consistently attacks the Government when it implements the risk/return framework advocated by the Beale Review Panel;
- that the Beale review was critical of the Coalition's Mandatory Intervention Targets; and
- that the Coalition's policy had diminished the Australian Government's capacity to perform proper risk assessments.

1.9 In relation to Recommendation 3, Government Senators note this recommendation.

In conclusion, Government Senators oppose Recommendations 1 and 2 of the majority report.

Senator Glenn Sterle

Deputy Chair