

List of recommendations

Recommendation 1

4.19 The committee recommends that the *Primary Industries Levies and Charges Collection Act 1991* be amended, consistent with subsections 27(3) and 27(3A), to enable the collection and distribution of levy payer information which will allow the creation of levy payer databases for all agricultural industries that pay agricultural levies. The committee further recommends that levy payer databases be established within two years of the legislative amendment.

Recommendation 2

4.20 The committee recommends that data collected for the purposes of levy databases and held by the Department of Agriculture should be limited to information sufficient to enable organisations responsible for spending or allocating levy funds to communicate with levy payers and enable votes to be allocated on a production basis. Data should include location, contact details, crop or enterprise type and production volume and/or value. Databases should be held by the appropriate levy-payer owned body, and be available to appropriate authorities under circumstances of biosecurity emergencies.

Recommendation 3

4.21 The committee recommends the establishment of a cost-effective, automated agricultural levy system. The system should identify levy payers against levies paid. The automated system should provide for more immediate settlement of levy fees paid and the allocation of voting entitlements where relevant. It should be subject to regular independent auditing and verification.

Recommendation 4

4.22 The committee recommends that where industry sectors are subject to levies by both states and territories and the Commonwealth, the merging of record keeping and levy collection should be investigated to avoid duplication and reduce costs to producers.

Recommendation 5

4.28 The committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture provide agricultural industries with a timeframe for levy application and amendment decisions.

Recommendation 6

4.29 The committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with relevant agricultural industries, conduct a review of the process to establish and amend agricultural levies including modifications to levy components. The review should identify methods to provide for a more cost-effective and responsive process while maintaining an appropriate level of accountability.

Recommendation 7

4.32 The committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture review and if necessary, redraft the criteria for Prescribed Industry Bodies (PIBs) with a view to developing a transparent, uniform and contestable process, including published criteria and thresholds as applicable, for the recognition of PIBs for the purposes of collecting levies.

4.33 The committee further recommends that PIBs already recognised under legislation should be required by the Department of Agriculture to conclusively demonstrate, within a period of no more than five years, that they meet the criteria referred to in Recommendation 7 in order to remain the recognised PIB for their relevant industry sector.