

Committee Secretary
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

2nd April 2016

**Subject: - Submission-Inquiry into the Primary Industries Levies and Charges Collection
Amendment Bill 2016**

The government is to be congratulated on progress in relation to the single Senate recommendation in relation to the Inquiry into Grass Fed Cattle Transaction Levies. We would however request that all seven recommendations be adopted; adoption of part of a single recommendation achieves little in relation to what was recommended by the bipartisan Senate Inquiry.

Food Producers Landowners Action Group Australia Incorporated (FLAG) make this submission for its subscribers and supporters.

The issue we consider totally unacceptable are those relating to privacy and the “distribution” of private identifiers and information to any organisation other than those that we wish to join voluntarily and with consent i.e. Section 27

“In limited circumstances, the Secretary can permit, in writing, secondary disclosure of this information. Such circumstances could include provision of information to an information technology company engaged by an RDC for data management services. The Secretary could also allow an industry representative body to access levy payer information to consult on amendments to a levy or to consult on an RDC’s R&D plan, for example.”

These include:-

1) The Commonwealth public authority Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) which is registered as a Corporation and shouldn’t be. Financially we are already forced financial contributors. There appears to be no valid functions in the current Bill to have the levy payers identify themselves, in relation to their levy payments; as a result the levy collection can still be attributed to intermediaries by the intermediary and the MLA voting registers will still be corrupt. Under these conditions we consider it unacceptable that personal identifiers be supplied to MLA, unless all Senate recommendations are adopted, and proper levy payer control of MLA can occur. Under no circumstances do we or our subscribers and supporters wish to compulsory forced members of MLA, a government public authority, which expends consolidated revenue and its members have no rights to allocate expenditure at all because it is consolidated revenue.

2) On no account do we agree that private identifier and levy information be released to any prescribed industry body, e.g. Cattle Council Australia (CCA) or Sheepmeat Council of Australia (SCA). Bodies like CCA and SCA do not represent us, our subscribers or supporters and cannot speak for us. These bodies represent less than 10% of red meat animal breeders. CCA and bodies like it e.g. Livestock Producers SA (LPSA) are currently funded by levies and

are taken by Governments at State and Federal level to have us, our subscribers and supporters as their assigned constituency and are used by Government as our representatives. This is false and must cease. CCA is also funded by MLA via backhanded funding for services by MLA, and are not independent of government or MLA as a result. LPSA are funded from SA State levies and as a result cannot represent us for the same reason.

Under no circumstance(s) must the secretary be given authority to disclose any personal and private, or corporate information regarding any levy payer to any industry secondary participant or body or non-industry participant or body without the exclusive written consent of the levy payer. Authority must be obtained from the levy payer before the secretary can permit secondary disclosure regardless of whether or not that circumstance is 'limited' or in 'writing'. Political bodies such as Peak Councils are to be totally excluded from access to and/or disseminating any information held within the register. To avoid real or perceived bias and/or corruption and potential harassment, actions that require any amendments to 'a levy' or to consult on an RDC's R&D plan (for example) are actions between the levy payer and the levy receiving RDC, and not Peak Council(s) or any other industry body purporting to be a stakeholder or represent a stakeholder. There is little doubt that prescribed industry peak bodies or councils will see an opportunity in using the information to promote their own views about the industry or to canvas other people's views or to run a political campaign and this is totally unacceptable!

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your submission request.

Yours sincerely,

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