

**SENATE RURAL & REGIONAL AFFAIRS & TRANSPORT
LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**

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**Inquiry into the Biosecurity Bill 2012 and the Inspector-General of Biosecurity
Bill 2012**

Hobart, Wednesday, 8 May 2013

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Brand Tasmania Council

Notes for biosecurity meeting 8 May 2013

- The Brand Tasmania Council values this opportunity to contribute to the Senate Inquiry on the *Biosecurity Bill 2012*.
- The Brand Tasmania Council is an independent marketing body established in 1999 by exporters and supported by the Tasmanian Government.
- The council has been briefed by industry on the *Biosecurity Bill 2012*.
- The council considers this to be a fundamentally important piece of legislation for Australian and in particular Tasmanian primary producers.
- It is essential to the defence of their unique regional reputation for goods and services of exceptional quality.
- Tasmanians have worked hard over generations to develop their \$2.2 billion primary industries.
- This effort could easily be compromised by introduced pests and diseases that exist elsewhere in the world.
- The council is grateful that other stakeholders have committed to also give testimony.
- Brand Tasmania represents the interests of many businesses, including the primary producers that drive regional economies in this State.
- The council fully endorses the submission and testimony of the other stakeholders to the Senate Committee.

- Brand Tasmania encourages the Senate Committee to also consider the submissions of our primary producers such as the Primary Industry Biosecurity Action Alliance (PIBAA), which represents 18 peak bodies in Tasmania.
- The issues raised by the TSGA are in many cases common to all of our primary industries:
 1. Maintaining the existing recognition of regional differences in biosecurity risk;
 2. Maintaining the present oversight by an independent, expert group of scientists to ensure transparency and integrity of decision making; and
 3. Concern over conflict of interest and right of appeal regarding the Director of Biosecurity.
 4. The implementation of a rigorous and defensible bio security risk management system that is based on science.
- Our primary producers, including salmonid farmers and apple and pear growers, apiarist, vegetable farmers, and horticultural farmers face an uncertain and perilous future if they lose the existing, common-sense biosecurity protections for their land, waterways and products.
- Our region has maintained freedom from many pests and diseases and is recognised globally as a very special source of agriculture and aquaculture products.
- This reputation supports an opportunity for premium prices for our products in some of the world's most discerning markets. These higher prices are recognition of the trust others have in our food brand. Unfortunately the higher prices are only a compensation for the higher transport costs our producers have to manage within the supply chains.
- The high quality reputation that underpins Tasmania's food products is also fundamental to Tasmania's tourism appeal, creating opportunities for continued economic development and the protection of natural heritage values.

- Primary industry employs one in five workers in Tasmania. The flow on of these direct jobs represents an enormous share of our economy and continues to grow.
 - We believe the regional difference of Tasmania to other parts of Australia and the existing governance safeguards of independent expert review and appeal rights are currently missing from this very important legislation.
 - In the view of the Brand Tasmania Council, the Bill must include these provisions to ensure that the scope and purpose of enacting legislation is unambiguous.
 - It is not acceptable, from our perspective, to rely on assurances for future regulations without strong principles for regional difference and good governance explicitly stated in the Bill.
 - The council agrees with the submission of the TSGA, PIBAA, Fruit Growers Tasmania and the TFGA and other stakeholders that amendments to the Bill are needed to address these omissions.
 - Australians assume food safety is guaranteed, this is unfortunately not the case in many markets and that of course our level of food safety is at times our point of difference and our marketing advantage. It is also of value to the rest of the world.
5. The number one priority for the Brand Tasmania Council is:
- to ensure that transparent processes and scientifically independent oversight is used to assess threats to specific regions where the consequences of pests and diseases represent unacceptable risks to local economies, social integrity and environments.**
- Many Tasmanians have worked strategically and diligently to establish our reputation of regional difference.
 - We trust that the Senate Committee will enable us to continue our successes by recommending sensible amendments to the Bill.