

Australian Greens Dissenting Report

1.1 Evidence presented in submissions to both this inquiry and others relating to the APVMA have demonstrated that due to the relocation to Armidale, the APVMA has lost capacity and is unable to meet its core functioning.

1.2 However, the Greens do not believe that this loss of functioning should be rectified by relying on third party assessments.

1.3 The potential conflict of interest that will be created by registrants being able to select their own third party providers to conduct assessments is galling. The CPSU sums this up well:

Chemical companies invest significant resources in product development and delays in regulatory approval can carry significant costs. It is foreseeable that they may prioritise their financial interests ahead of the public interest. Independent assessors would also have a financial interest in attracting and retaining assessment work. This increases the risk of decisions being influenced by financial concerns or pressures.¹

1.4 While accreditation may provide some degree of restraint, the Bill would delegate the specifics of the accreditation of third party assessors to the APVMA itself, without parliamentary oversight.

1.5 Collectively these changes not only risk exacerbating the existing perceptions of a lack of independence and good process within the APVMA, but could be interpreted as the privatisation of our chemical assessment regime.

1.6 It is hard to interpret this shift to needing outside support from third parties as anything other than an admission that the relocation strategy has failed.

1.7 Other measures contained in the Bill are equally problematic. Multiple submitters raised concerns with the intent to streamline assessment of 'prescribed applications', pointing to the lack of clarity in the Bill around how the APVMA will identify risk and what the appropriate thresholds for determining 'low' or 'medium' risk would be.

1.8 Further concerns were raised about the Bill's changes to the limitation and protection periods for private information, which would further erode the public's access to timely information and could negatively impact input costs for growers.

1.9 Given the ongoing crisis in the legitimacy and perceptions of independence of the APVMA, a Bill which reduces regulatory oversight, reduces public oversight and outsources the core functioning of the body is a Bill that is going in the entirely wrong direction.

1.10 While the Greens acknowledge the problems created for the APVMA by the relocation, alternative solutions to 'streamlining regulation' must be found if the APVMA is to maintain public confidence.

1 Community and Public Sector Union, *Submission 12*, p. [1].

Recommendation 1

1.11 The Australian Greens recommend that the Bill be opposed.

**Senator Janet Rice
Australian Greens**