

Additional comments by Government Senators

Recommendation 1 – The committee recommends that beef and beef products should not be imported from any country that has:

- ***reported any cases of BSE; or***
- ***cross-border trade with an adjoining country which has reported any cases of BSE.***

Do not support.

Australia maintains comprehensive controls that protect Australians from exposure to unsafe food through the application of food safety policy and standards developed by FSANZ, and implemented by DAFF (for imported products) and state and territory food authorities.

The Australian Government regards the health and safety of Australian consumers and our favourable animal health status as matters of the highest importance. As such, the Government's current policy on imported beef and beef products does not allow these products to be imported unless the risks associated with BSE are adequately managed. Australia's risk assessments are consistent with Australia's World Trade Organization (WTO) obligations. Prohibiting beef imports from any country that has ever reported a case of BSE, regardless of its current official disease status and risk management measures, would be inconsistent with these obligations. Such a requirement could significantly damage our credibility as a country that conducts science-based risk assessments and applies the least trade-restrictive risk-management measures necessary.

Recommendation 3 – The Committee recommends the relevant Minister report any decision to approve or reject such recommendations to Parliament and this Committee prior to a determination by the Director of Animal and Plant Quarantine, in the case of an import risk analysis, or the chief officer of FSANZ, in the case of BSE country assessment, and prior to formal advice being provided to the applicant country.

Do not support.

The Australian Government advocates a science-based approach to decisions about the entry into Australia of imported products. There is a robust decision making framework through primary and subordinate legislation which delegates decision making in this regard to officials, in some cases with the guidance of eminent and independent scientists. It would be inappropriate for information on government-to-government processes to be communicated to individuals not directly involved in the process before the decision making process is completed.

Senator Glenn Sterle
Deputy Chair