

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
Legislation Committee**

**Interim report on the Australian Quarantine and Inspection
Service and the importation of salmon**

The Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee is undertaking an inquiry into the effectiveness of the legal and regulatory regimes governing the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) and the need to ensure transparency, consistency, scientific rigour and the highest standards of protection of the environment, the local fish population and the fishing and recreational fishing industries of Australia.

The reference specifically requires the Committee, in the course of its inquiry, to have particular regard to the administrative procedures and decision-making processes involved in the July 1999 AQIS Import Risk Analysis to allow the importation of salmon products into Australia and the potential consequences of that decision for those involved in the salmon farming industry and other stakeholder industries.

The Committee considers that the reference, while requiring particular assessment of the decision on salmon imports, is of significantly wider impact. The issues include:

- ❖ The WTO process and the respective roles played by AQIS and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in that process;
- ❖ Whether sufficient consideration was taken of developments in the science since the 1996 IRA and the most recent assessment;

- ❖ how AQIS undertakes its Import Risk Analysis process, including the methodology used by AQIS in the development of the IRA, and any impact that the shortened timeframe had on that process;
- ❖ The development of the Appropriate Level of Protection and the roles of the respective agencies in the determination of the ALOP.

These issues are complex and require detailed consideration.

The Committee also understands that the OIE, the international animal health organisation, is holding an international conference in February, 2000 on risk analysis in aquatic animal health. The Committee considers that the findings of this conference may be of assistance in its consideration of the risk analysis issues.

For these reasons, the Committee wishes to make this report an interim report and to present a more considered report next year.

7 December 1999