



AUSTRALIAN SENATE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORT

REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Senator the Hon. John Hogg
President of the Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr President,

In 2012, the Senate referred several inquiries regarding the importation of fresh produce to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee. The details of which are as follows:

Inquiry	Date Referred	Previous Interim Report/s
Inquiry into the effect on Australian pineapple growers of importing fresh pineapples from Malaysia	20 June 2012	October 2012 March 2013 July 2013 September 2013
Inquiry into the effect on Australian ginger growers of importing fresh ginger from Fiji	19 September 2012	March 2013 July 2013 September 2013
Inquiry into the proposed importation of potatoes from New Zealand	12 September 2012	March 2013 July 2013 September 2013

Submissions received to each inquiry from pineapple, ginger and potato stakeholder groups raised issues relevant to their specific industry. Whilst the three inquiries were all referred within a three-month period, and shared similar reporting dates, the committee resolved to conduct hearings for each of the inquiries separately.

As noted in the committee's previous interim reports, following the completion of the evidence gathering part of these three inquiries, the committee made the decision to amalgamate the three reports and table them together as a single report. The committee noted that this approach would enable the recurring theme common to each of these inquiries (the operation of the Department of Agriculture's Risk Estimation Matrix (REM)) to be a central focus, whilst at the same time allowing for detailed consideration of the significant and specific issues relevant to each separate inquiry.

On 5 September 2013, the committee advised the Senate that it had been unable to conclude its inquiry. The committee also advised that in order to give further consideration to the evidence provided, and conclude its deliberations, it would be recommending to the Senate that these inquiries be re-referred to the committee in the new Parliament.

On 14 November 2013, the Senate agreed to the committee's recommendation that these inquiries be re-adopted in the 44th Parliament. At that time, the Senate also set a reporting date on 28 February 2014.

The committee wishes to extend this reporting date to 31 March 2014 to allow it to give full consideration to the evidence and conclude its deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

Senator Glenn Sterle
Chair

28 February 2014