

Australian Greens' Additional Comments

1.1 Committee recommendations on removing the exemption on mandatory country of origin labelling (CoOL) are a significant and welcome first step towards addressing the labelling of seafood that would ultimately be beneficial to consumers, the local fishing industry and the national economy. However, they fall short of the opportunity provided by this Inquiry to recommend and build support for a stronger framework for critical national and international ocean sustainability outcomes.

1.2 It is disappointing that the committee didn't take this opportunity to recommend to the Government a complete approach to implementing seafood labelling that would much more acutely focus on ocean sustainability outcomes. This approach should include recommended regulatory actions – possibly staged to provide time for consideration of formal regulatory impact assessments, adoption by the market, and compliance - on Australian Fish Names Standards and then move on to more comprehensive sustainability and provenance labelling standards.

1.3 The Greens believe that despite the ongoing complexity of the work of the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation in relation to Australian Fish Names Standard this should not be used as an excuse to delay moves to more holistic seafood labelling.

1.4 Sustainability and provenance labelling can be crafted by improving on and localising the current European Union (EU) Regulation 1379/2013 and lessons will be learned in the EU over the coming months as the regulation is implemented. The Greens position is that this is a natural evolution for seafood labelling in Australia.

1.5 Seafood labelling is one element of ensuring sustainable fisheries management in Australia. The Review of Commonwealth Fisheries: Legislation, Policy and Management led by David Borthwick AO PSM and delivered on 17 December 2012 identified gaps and recommended required improvements specifically in the areas of ecological risk and ecosystem impacts, the application of the precautionary principle, and transparently addressing the trade-offs between ecological and industry outcomes.

1.6 These specific recommendations from the Borthwick Review go to the core of the long-term ecological and economic sustainability of the Australian seafood industry. The Government is yet to respond to this important report and this should be noted in the committee's final report.

1.7 Until it does so, the Greens believe any assumptions that all Australian Seafood caught and sold is “ecologically sustainable” (in contrast to imported seafood being unacceptably high risk in sustainability terms) is potentially misleading and counterproductive to the aims of broader seafood labelling in achieving sustainability outcomes.

1.8 This inquiry's recommendations - whilst a step in the right direction - have given primacy to untested red-tape and business cost issues over achieving better

ocean sustainability outcomes, which are long-term requirements for both the marketplace and marine stewardship.

1.9 The Greens hope that community support and political pressure for better labelling will lead to continued improvements over time in sustainable seafood labelling.

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