

8 May 2024

Senator Murray Watt
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Correspondence via email: senator.watt@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator

Re: Farmers call on senators to vote against the Biosecurity Protection Levy and #ScraptheTax

On behalf of the Turf Growers Association, NSW (Turf NSW), I am writing to you to reiterate the agricultural sectors' continued opposition to the government's proposed Biosecurity Protection Levy (BPL, Levy).

Today, we join farmers across states, territories and industries to call on senators to #ScraptheTax. While Turf NSW supports efforts to strengthen and better fund Australia's biosecurity system, we strongly oppose the Levy on Australian farmers.

The Levy is set to be implemented on 1 July 2024 and will impact almost all of Australia's 85,000 producers. There is no information publicly available to industry on how this Levy will be collected or administered. The Government has failed to afford the time and consideration necessitated by a policy of this significance.

Importantly, this is not a matter of farmers 'not wanting to pay more.' Australian farmers already contribute significantly to biosecurity activities and pest & disease management! They already pay billions for biosecurity through the existing levies systems, on-farm activities, investments in traceability systems, and contributions to state and regional landholder agencies. Farmers also often foot the bill for biosecurity outbreaks, like the estimated \$5 billion it will cost to eradicate Varroa Mite or the \$80 billion cost of a potential foot-and-mouth disease outbreak.

Our reasons for opposing the Levy can be summarised as follows:

- The Levy doesn't follow the usual rules for collecting and using industry levies. This could hurt our existing ag levies, which fund rural research and development and impact industry spending on research and innovation.
- The policy doesn't align with the National Biosecurity Strategy, which Commonwealth, state and territory governments all agreed to.
- The Levy fails to recognise that farmers already contribute to Australia's biosecurity.
- There is no guarantee that levy funds will be spend on tangible and additional biosecurity activities, as they go directly to consolidated revenue.
- The Government has ignored calls by industry and independent reviews to put a levy on container imports or equivalent. Importers create biosecurity risks. It is simply good public policy to ensure that they bear the cost of managing those risks, rather than farmers having to foot the bill to manage the pests and diseases they bring to our shores.

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- Independent experts, including the Australian National University, Productivity Commission and Office of Impact Analysis, have validated and reiterated these concerns. They have labelled this policy as inefficient, 'at odds with standard tax practice' and recommended several alternatives be considered instead.

For these reasons, we ask for your help to #ScraptheTax and urge you to vote against the Biosecurity Protection Levy Bills in parliament. The government must take this policy back to the drawing board.

Please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss this matter further, via e-mail: info@turfnsw.com.au or phone: 0408 441 119.

Yours sincerely,



Jenny Zadro
Executive Officer
Turf NSW