



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Windsor calls for halt on Quarantine Import Risk Assessments

The Independent Member for New England, Mr Tony Windsor, has called for a halt on the election driven scramble on quarantine import risk assessments and reviews of Biosecurity Australia's operating process. Up to 2,000 poultry industry jobs in the Tamworth area are under threat from imported diseases due proposals within the Thailand Free Trade agreement.

Mr Windsor said, "The election driven 'Dutch auction' on quarantine Import Risk Assessments (IRAs) and the operating protocols for Biosecurity Australia will lead to great inequities between industries. The pork industry and chicken meat industries are facing decimation, yet because these IRAs are not issues in seats such as Gippsland no reassessment of these two very flawed processes is available.

"The Tamworth region has up to 2,000 jobs dependent on the poultry industry. This industry is under threat from an Import Risk Assessment process that will not give equal weighting to economic impacts on producers caused by imported diseases.

"All Import Risk Assessments pending and just completed should be halted and a full roundtable of industry, trade, scientists and political representatives should be held after the election to design a model that includes recognition of the economic impacts on producers of increased production costs and lost markets brought on by introduced diseases.

"The latest so called 'review' of Biosecurity Australia is a disastrous attempt to place a fundamentally flawed quarantine review process far enough away from government to preclude any meaningful reform.

"Reform of IRA processes needs to include the capacity to meet trade outcomes at the same time as protecting Australian farmers from the economic impacts of imported diseases.

"Australia's compliance with the World Trade Organisation agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (quarantine) protocols has locked us into consideration of primarily human and animal health safety issues with economic impacts on producers bearing little impact on the assessment.

"A disease free status and the associated lower production costs are one of the few trade advantages of Australia's geographic isolation. Why are we trading it away through a flawed IRA process?" concluded Mr Windsor.

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