Wheat Marketing
Amendment Bill (No.2) 1987

Date Introduced: 23 September 1987
House: House of Representatives
Presented by: The Hon. John Kerin, M.P., Minister for Primary Industries and Energy

Digest of Bill

Purpose
To amend the Wheat Marketing Act 1984 (the Principal Act) to provide for the reimbursement of consultation expenses to the Grains Council and other bodies; to alter the basis for membership of the Australian Wheat Board Selection Committee (AWBSC); and to require the Australian Wheat Board to implement an equal employment opportunity program.

Background
The primary objective of the Australian Wheat Board (AWB) is to secure, develop and maintain markets for Australian wheat and to maximise the return to growers. Among the Board's other objectives are the development of an efficient marketing framework, the establishment of efficient management and the encouragement of planning and coordination in the wheat industry.

The AWB was established originally under the Wheat Industry (Wartime Control) Act 1939, replacing all wheat marketing bodies in existence in Australia at that time. As part of a move to increase its financial and marketing expertise, the Wheat Marketing Act 1984 restructured the membership of AWB, providing for representation from wheatgrowing, finance, commerce, marketing and other areas of expertise. Further restructuring amendments in 1985 reduced the maximum membership of AWB from sixteen to eleven. A Selection Committee was established consisting of an independent presiding member selected by the Minister, five wheatgrowers nominated by the Australian Wheatgrowers' Federation, the AWB Chairperson, and the President (or the President's nominee) and one other representative of the National Farmers' Federation. In the Second Reading Speech for this Bill, the Minister stated that by removing NFF representatives and the AWB Chairperson from the Selection Committee, objectivity in the selection process would be preserved by having a membership independent from that of AWB.1

The Government's position on the funding of industry organisations by
statutory marketing authorities (SMAs), such as AWB, is guided by the principle that SMAs, being funded under statutory powers, should not become a conduit for subsidising agro-political activities. Thus, payments to industry organisations are only to be permitted by legislation, and only for expenses arising from consultations that are necessary for the SMA to fulfil its charter.

**Main Provisions**

The AWB will be permitted to arrange consultations and to pay the travel expenses of those who attend them (clause 4 which will insert a new section 11A into the Principal Act).

Section 13 of the Principal Act deals with consultations between the Board and the Grains Council (the former Australian Wheatgrowers' Federation). Clause 5 will amend the section to allow the Board to reimburse the Grains Council for consultation expenses. Reimbursement will be based on guidelines to be issued by the Minister.

At present, the Chairperson of the Board and two representatives of the National Farmers' Federation (NFF), one of whom may be the NFF President, are included as members of the Selection Committee by section 331 of the Principal Act. They will be excluded from membership of the Selection Committee by clause 6.

The Board is to develop, implement and give effect to an equal employment opportunity program in keeping with the principle that employment matters should be dealt with on the basis of merit (clause 11 which will insert new sections 45AA, 45AB and 45AC into the Principal Act).

**References**


For further information, if required, contact the Economics and Commerce Group.

12 November 1987

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