



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BILLS

**Export Legislation Amendment Bill 2014,
Export Inspection (Quantity Charge)
Amendment Bill 2014, Export Inspection
(Service Charge) Amendment Bill
2014, Export Inspection (Establishment
Registration Charges) Amendment Bill 2014**

Second Reading

SPEECH

Wednesday, 28 May 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Wednesday, 28 May 2014
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Questioner
Speaker McCormack, Michael, MP

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Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (13:07): I rise to sum up on the Export Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, the Export Inspection (Quantity Charge) Amendment Bill 2014, the Export Inspection (Service Charge) Amendment Bill 2014 and the Export Inspection (Establishment Registration Charges) Amendment Bill 2014.

Australian farmers are world leaders in producing efficient, sustainable and high-quality produce to meet demand both here and abroad. Australia exports around 65 per cent of its farm products, 75 per cent of its fish products and 60 per cent of its forest products, worth more than \$41 billion in 2012-13.

I might take a moment to speak on the shadow agricultural minister's amendment. The government is eager to ensure that Australia has the most rigorous and robust biosecurity system possible. The coalition has noted the previous government's attempts to introduce the biosecurity bill and its subsequent referral to the Senate inquiry for scrutiny. Many submissions were made to that inquiry, which highlighted certain deficiencies in the legislation that the government believes need to be addressed before reintroduction. The government is certainly continuing the development of the biosecurity bill with a view to reintroducing it once the concerns held by relevant stakeholders and industry have been addressed.

Agricultural exports are the lifeblood of my Riverina electorate. There is not much we do not grow in the Riverina, from wheat and apples to wine and alpacas, and just about everything in between. The area around Griffith in my electorate in the Western Riverina grows three-quarters of the wine grapes grown in New South Wales, which generates around \$800 million each year in wine exports.

I know that the member for Murray, the member for Grey and the member for Calare feel similarly strongly about the importance of agriculture in their electorates, and I thank them for their contributions in this debate. It is always a pleasure to hear those opposite take an interest in Australian agriculture, and I acknowledge the contribution to the debate made by the member for Hunter, who is, of course, the shadow minister for agriculture. I thank as well the members for Hotham and Makin.

The legislation which underpins Australian agricultural exports is being amended to place it on a more sustainable footing. The bill package amends the Export Inspection and Meat Charges Collection Act 1985, the Export Inspection (Quantity Charge) Act 1985, the Export Inspection (Service Charge) Act 1985 and the Export Inspection (Establishment Registration Charges) Act 1985 to remedy technical defects in these acts and to allow more consistent and equitable cost-recovery for services provided to exporters by the department.

Inconsistent definitions in these acts have meant that the department has been unable to recover establishment registration and quantity charges for exporting certain products. If you receive a service, you should pay for it. Allowing some exporters a free ride is inequitable and not in the long-term interests of the agriculture sector as a whole. These amendments will address the inconsistencies identified and enable the department to recover around \$1.9 million per annum in a manner which is equitable and consistent across the whole of the primary production export system.

The bill package also amends the Australian Meat and Live-stock Industry Act 1997 to enable the department to recover costs relating to services, such as issuing quota certificates for quotas that are administered by other countries. These amendments are largely supported by industry, who believe that costs for export services carried out by the department be appropriately and consistently recovered. Cost-recovery also plays a role in keeping government agencies accountable for their performance. If you pay for a service, you generally care more about the service that you are getting.

The bill package also corrects errors in the Export Control Act 1982 and the Imported Food Control Act 1992. The bills are an important piece of legislation which not only provide a fairer and more consistent approach to cost-recovery for services provided to exporters but will also provide departmental officers greater access to

important documents and information in a timely manner, making it easier for them to perform the important role of protecting Australia's biosecurity—and we know how important that is. Maintaining a strong and reputable biosecurity system is vitally important if we are to protect Australia's unique animal and plant health status, as we have just heard from the member for Murray.

Australia is free from many of the pests and diseases found in other parts of the world, and this is a significant and selling point for our produce in overseas markets. That is why we are going ahead with the construction of a new post-entry quarantine facility at Mickleham in Melbourne. This new, modern facility will enhance our capacity to manage the risks posed by ever-increasing amounts of new plant and animal material coming into Australia. It will replace a range of outdated facilities that are no longer fit for purpose. I was very pleased to join the Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce, at the sod turning at that post-entry quarantine facility in Victoria recently.

Last night the House passed legislation to remove red tape around the use of agvet chemicals, which will implement an important election commitment to remove the reapproval and re-registration scheme introduced by Labor. The government is cutting red tape to the agricultural sector and investing in the biosecurity infrastructure, and with these amendments we are ensuring the future integrity and sustainability of the biosecurity system which helps keep Australian food, fibre and meat production safe and clean.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

Question negatived.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question now is that the bill be read a second time.

Bill read a second time.