

GLENRIDGE PARK

David and Lyn Slade,

13th February 2018

Environment and Public Affairs Committee

Re: New Inquiry into mechanisms for compensation for economic loss to farmers in Western Australia caused by contamination by genetically modified materials

Dear Committee members,

It is with some disappointment that we feel compelled to put in a submission to this inquiry. It is hoped that all committee members will read and fully understand the reasons behind the judgement in the Marsh vs Baxter case which found that the loss of organic status for the Marsh farm was caused by misapplication of the NASAA standards and not from contamination from GM canola that was grown on the Baxter property.

The GM debate in WA seems to have become a political football with little regard for the proven science and facts. We are farmers in the Mount Barker region of WA and grow both GM and non-GM canola on the same property and we have experienced no issues with either segregation or marketing of our canola. There is no doubt that the development of GM technology has allowed significant advances for the agricultural industry through higher yields, reduction in chemical use, greater weed control and increased flexibility in crop rotations. Scientific evidence has also proven that this technology is safe and it is widely used and accepted in many other countries around the world.

GM technology has brought significant advances in medicine. Our cotton shirts are made from GM cotton crops. The soy products on our supermarket shelves come from GM crops. These products are widely accepted by consumers.

We fully support the right of farmers to choose to use GM technology on their farms and also respect the right for farmers to choose not to grow GM crops or to farm organically. Any disputes between neighbours that cannot be resolved should be determined by the courts.

The proposal for a levy on GM crops appears to be driven by politics. It would be an unfair impost on farmers, create additional red tape and compliance issues would be unacceptable to the agricultural industry.

This is an extremely important issue for the agricultural industry and the final report will be heavily scrutinised to ensure any recommendations are based on facts and proven science rather than political expediency. We appreciate that farmers are few in voting numbers but the agricultural industry is too important to be used as a political football.

Yours sincerely,