

The Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs

27 February 2018

Dear Chair

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

GrainGrowers is an independent and technically resourced, grain farmer representative organization with over 17,000 members across Australia. GrainGrowers' goal is a more efficient, sustainable and profitable grain production sector that benefits all Australian grain farmers and the wider grains industry.

GrainGrowers provides this submission to reinforce and support the views put forward by WAFarmers, particularly given the potential national implications of this inquiry.

GrainGrowers believes that grain farmers should always have the freedom of choice for the production systems and markets they pursue – be that genetically modified organisms (GMO), conventional, organic or any combination of these.

The ability to access gene technology is essential for the continued development and growth of the grains industry in Australia. This in turn allows us to maintain our international competitive and export earnings, with significant benefits for farmers, consumers and the Australian economy.

A rigorous regulatory framework exists through the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator to assess the environmental and public health aspects of all gene technology. Coupled with this, industry supply chains manage a wide range of segregations including for GM and non GM crops, which can accommodate crops from different farm production systems. The supply chain system already has appropriate mechanisms in place to deal with low level presence in line with international standards.

Furthermore should specific contamination issues arise, then common law remedies exist to pursue on a case by case basis - this is an appropriate and reasonable mechanism to ensure full and careful consideration is given to the specific issues at hand.

Therefore GrainGrowers is opposed to a separate mechanism to consider GM contamination on the basis it is unnecessary as common law remedies already exist, and is likely to compromise a farmer's ability to choose to grow OGTR approved GM crops.

GrainGrowers recommends the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs maintain the status quo and not support any separate mechanism to consider GM contamination.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. McKeon".

Mr David McKeon
CEO, GrainGrowers