

MEDIA RELEASE



The Hon **David Hawker** MP

Federal Member for Wannon



19 August 2009

COALITION MOVES FOR AQIS FEES SENATE INQUIRY

The Coalition will move to set up a Senate inquiry into the Rudd Labor Government's decision to abolish the 40 per cent fee rebate for the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service's certification and inspection of agricultural exports, which could cost thousands of regional jobs.

Federal Member for Wannon, David Hawker, said the abolition of this rebate has led to concern among many in the local agriculture sector of unacceptable cost increases for these important services before reforms are implemented.

"The Rudd Government's changes have been described as a massive new impost or tax on exporters, which will flow through to farmers, amounting to \$43 million per year," Mr Hawker said.

"It is important that all members of the agricultural sector are provided with an opportunity to have a say on the Rudd Government's abolishment of the AQIS rebates.

"This inquiry will allow all industry stakeholders to express their clear views on the AQIS reforms and rebate abolishment, supportive, non-supportive or otherwise.

"It is proposed that this Senate inquiry, to be referred to the Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport, will determine the financial or other significant impact on the various affected industry sectors."

Mr Hawker said the proposed inquiry will also scrutinise Government commitments and management of the AQIS changes, including development of industry work plans and consultation processes.

"This inquiry will ensure all members of parliament are more informed about a critical matter to Western Victoria's farmers and agricultural exporters.

Mr Hawker said abolishing this rebate would especially affect our local seafood, dairy and meat industries, with the bulk of these extra costs being passed back to primary producers.

"The Coalition will continue to fight for regional jobs and to ensure local exporters are not taxed out of existence by the Rudd Government," he said.

- ENDS -

Media contact: Jane Templeton (02) 6277 4118

The Hon **David Hawker** MP Federal Member for Wannon

Hamilton Office 190 Gray St, HAMILTON VIC 3300 **Warrnambool Office** 73 Kepler St WARRNAMBOOL VIC 3280

Freecall 1300 131 692 **E** David.Hawker.MP@aph.gov.au **W** www.davidhawker.com.au