

LAST CHANCE FOR IMPROVEMENTS ON AGVETCHEM BILL

Crop protection industry calls on Minister Ludwig to acknowledge the evidence, ignore the politics and make reasonable amendments

Thursday 28 February 2013 (Canberra) The Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee's report into the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment Bill 2012* is a disappointment to the plant science industry and the broader Australian agricultural sector. The majority report's recommendation to pass the Bill without further amendments ignores the evidence presented to the Committee and demonstrates a preference for political gain over good policy.

CropLife Australia CEO, Matthew Cossey, today said "In the interests of genuine and effective public policy, the government should ignore the politics and go back to the evidence. Minister Ludwig has at his fingertips reasonable amendments that could easily be made in order to allow the legislation to achieve its stated purpose of addressing inefficiencies in the current regulatory regime."

Mr Cossey commended those members of the Committee who authored the dissenting report for delving deeply into the legislation and recommending that the Bill not be passed in its current form.

"The fact that the majority report ignored a number of entirely uncontroversial amendments proposed to the Committee by a number of stakeholders severely undermines the credibility of its recommendation.

"The re-registration system set out in the Bill was an election commitment made by this government for the sake of a superficial political win. It promises a uniquely clumsy system for reviews that will not deliver any public health or environmental benefit and will further diminish the APVMA's capacity to do its job." Mr Cossey said.

The Productivity Commission report into Plastics and Chemicals Regulation and the ANAO's inquiry into the APVMA have confirmed that Australia has a world leading system for effective management of risk associated with agricultural chemicals, but what continues to be demonstrated is that the APVMA is not efficient in the way that it conducts its work.

"If this Bill passes without the simple improvements outlined in the dissenting report, our nation's farmers may lose access to safe and effective products on which they depend to run high yielding, environmentally sustainable and profitable farms. The consequences of this for Australian agriculture will be significant and far-reaching.

"We hope that the House of Representatives Inquiry into the same bill provides a greater contribution to improving the proposed legislation and will make the appropriate recommendations for amendments. These final stages before the Bill is debated should be about getting it right, not rushing through bad legislation", Mr Cossey continued.

"Australia's plant science industry remains committed to working with government and the parliament to ensure that this Bill will actually assist in safeguarding agricultural innovation, at a time when governments should be focused on agricultural productivity and global food security." Mr Cossey concluded.

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About CropLife Australia

CropLife Australia (CropLife) is the peak industry organisation representing the agricultural chemical and biotechnology (plant science) sector in Australia. CropLife represents the innovators, developers, manufacturers and formulators of crop protection and agricultural biotechnology products. The plant science industry provides products to protect crops against pests, weeds and diseases, as well as developing crop biotechnologies that are key to the nation's agricultural productivity, sustainability and food security. The plant science industry is worth more than \$1.5 billion a year to the Australian economy and directly employs thousands of people across the country.

CropLife and its members are committed to the stewardship of their products throughout their lifecycle and to ensuring that human health, environment and trade issues associated with agricultural chemical use in Australia are responsibly and sustainably managed. Our member companies spend more than \$13 million a year on stewardship activities to ensure the safe and effective use of their products. CropLife ensures the responsible use of these products through its mandatory industry code of conduct and has set a benchmark for industry stewardship through programs such as **drumMUSTER**, ChemClear® and Agsafe Accreditation and Training. Our stewardship activities demonstrate our commitment to managing the impacts associated with container waste and unwanted chemicals.

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