



Australian Government

Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

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31st August 2006

Standards and Accreditation Study
Productivity Commission
PO Box 80
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Dear Sir

I would just like to reiterate comments made previously by AQIS to the commission and reinforce the importance of AQIS's relationship with NATA and maintaining NATA's international reputation.

The Australian inspection system for red meat has just been audited by the United States, a market that contributed 1.6 billion dollars to the Australian economy in 2005. This was a compliance audit as findings at the previous audit indicated that the Australian system was not equivalent to that in the US. Of particular concern to the US was AQIS's oversight of microbiological and residue testing. In response to these criticisms AQIS has implemented the Approved Laboratory Program. This program allows AQIS and the US to have confidence in the performance of laboratories undertaking testing as part of export certification programs. NATA is an integral part of this program as it provides accreditation for the laboratories and through its memorandum of understanding with AQIS additional oversight of testing. The US was very supportive of the approach AQIS has taken and recognises the international standing of NATA. Any reduction in NATA's representation in ILAC (International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation), APLAC (Asia-Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation) or ISO (International Organization for Standardization) could undermine the credibility of the Approved Laboratory Program and threaten market access to the US.

I would hope that the Commission takes into account the importance of the relationship between NATA and AQIS when making recommendations about funding of NATA's participation in international and regional activities.

Yours Faithfully,

Paul Vanderlinde