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Executive Director Industrial Relations
Office of Industrial Relations
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via email: labourhirereg@justice.qld.gov.au

Dear Executive Director

Regulation of the Labour Hire Industry in Queensland

Australian Pork Limited (APL) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Queensland Government on regulation of the labour-hire industry in Queensland.

APL is the national representative body for Australian pork producers. APL is a producer-owned not-for-profit company combining marketing, export development, research and innovation and policy development to assist in securing a profitable and sustainable future for the Australian pork industry.

The Australian pork industry employs more than 20,000 people in Australia and contributes approximately \$2.8 billion in gross domestic product to the Australian economy. The pork industry contributes approximately 2.13% of total Australian farm production with roughly 1500 pig producers producing around 5 million pigs annually.

In the twelve months to November 2016, Queensland was the third largest producer of pork, slaughtering 22 per cent of the national herd.

Labour Hire Industry

Like many industries in the agriculture sector, the pork industry suffers from a lack of available skilled labour to fill shortages and ensure sustainable growth. In particular, producers are required to have tertiary qualified staff under the Model Code for Animal Welfare: Pigs. It is difficult to source appropriately qualified staff in regional areas, and domestic workers are unwilling to either work in the pork industry or move to take up the available positions. For these reasons, many producers are forced to seek individuals with the right skills from overseas and facilitate their employment in Australia under the 457 temporary skilled worker visa programme.

The pig industry is a responsible employer, and supports efforts to enforce reasonable minimum pay and conditions for all workers – local and foreign-born. We are engaged, at the federal level, with Government initiatives including the ATO's Phoenix Taskforce, and the Migrant Workers Taskforce to this end. In addition, pork producers have facilitated the relocation of overseas worker's families to ensure retention in difficult situations where the overseas worker has been alienated, for example, from a young child, to take up the position in Australia.

In principle, we would support a system of accreditation for labour hire contractors as a way of assisting producers satisfy due diligence if and when engaging a labour hirer. However, on a national basis, the pig industry is not a large user of labour hire services for sourcing local or overseas workers.

Overseas-born 457 workers are usually employed directly, but may be recruited with the assistance of an intermediary or facilitator. We are aware that some of these individuals or

companies, both Australian and overseas-based, have engaged in unethical or exploitative behaviour. This can occur when a potential 457 visa applicant is encouraged to borrow money from the facilitator to finance the cost of their visa/work application and relocation to Australia. The facilitator is then in a position to use the debt as leverage and take advantage of the worker.

While we are aware of this issue only anecdotally, APL would recommend the inquiry broaden its terms of reference on abusive practices in the labour hire industry to also consider overseas labour facilitation/introduction services.

Should you have any questions about this submission, please do not hesitate to contact Andrew Robertson on 02 62708888 or via email andrew.robertson@australianpork.com.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah Kerr". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

DEBORAH KERR
General Manager, Policy