

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This inquiry

On 12 November 1998, correspondence was received from the then Minister for the Environment, the Hon Pam Allan, MP, issuing the Standing Committee on State Development with terms of reference to inquire into and report upon the use and management of pesticides in New South Wales.

Following the March 1999 New South Wales State Election, the Legislative Council resolved to establish the Standing Committee on State Development for the 52nd Parliament along with the following two inquiries not previously completed during the 51st Parliament:¹

- Inquiry into the international competitiveness of agriculture in New South Wales; and
- Inquiry into the use and management of pesticides in New South Wales.

The Legislative Council further resolved that the Standing Committee might review any evidence, submissions or documents previously lodged with the Committee in the 51st Parliament.²

The Standing Committee advertised for public submissions to the inquiry in rural and metropolitan newspapers from the 28 November 1998. Following the establishment of the Standing Committee for the 52nd Parliament, the Committee wrote to all persons and organisations that had previous expressed interest in the inquiry. Those contacted were advised of the inquiry's re-establishment and the willingness of the Standing Committee to accept additional written submissions.

At time of publishing this report, the Standing Committee had received 191 submissions to the inquiry and heard evidence from 69 witnesses during five public hearings held in Sydney (twice), Dubbo, Gunnedah and Lismore. A total of 69 documents were tabled with the Standing Committee at the public hearings for the Committee's consideration. The Standing Committee conducted one site visit to a landholding in the Gunnedah area.

The Standing Committee received oral and written representations from a broad range of industry, government and interest groups expressing views from local,

¹ *Hansard*, Legislative Council, 52nd Parliament of New South Wales, p.293.

² *Hansard*, Legislative Council, 52nd Parliament of New South Wales, p.293.

state and national perspectives concerning the most appropriate approach for the use and management of pesticides in New South Wales.

1.1.1 NSW Environment Protection Authority discussion paper

The Standing Committee recognises the role that the NSW Environment Protection Authority has played in facilitating community discussion of amendments the Authority proposed for the *Pesticides Act 1978*.

In June 1997, the NSW Environment Protection Authority released a discussion paper entitled *Improving Pesticide Management in NSW*, outlining proposed amendments to the *Pesticides Act 1978*. At this point the NSW Environment Protection Authority advertised for submissions to be made in relation to the discussion paper. A closing date for submissions was set for 8 August 1997 although this was later extended to 31 August 1997. The NSW Environment Protection Authority conducted a total of six public consultation meetings in Dubbo, Griffith, Gunnedah, Lismore, Penrith and Yass during July 1997 to address issues outlined in the discussion paper. These meetings involved the attendance of over 320 participants.³

The NSW Environment Protection Authority received 127 submissions in response to its discussion paper. At the commencement of the Standing Committee's inquiry, the NSW Environment Protection Authority attempted to contact those who had made submissions to ascertain their willingness or otherwise for their submission to be forwarded to the Standing Committee for consideration. As a result of this process, 117 submissions were forwarded to the Standing Committee, and formed a significant part of the total 191 submissions received. The Authority's own submission takes account of the consultative process it conducted and subsequently refined a number of points it raised in the discussion paper.

1.1.2 Inquiry into the international competitiveness of agriculture in New South Wales

The terms of reference for this inquiry refer to the Standing Committee's concurrent inquiry into the international competitiveness of agriculture in New South Wales. The terms of reference for the agriculture inquiry are detailed in Appendix II of this report.

³ Submission No.37, NSW Environment Protection Authority, Part 3, p.1.

In preparing the terms of reference for the inquiry into the use and management of pesticides in New South Wales, the Minister for the Environment was aware of the relevance that the pesticides inquiry had to the issues already being considered by the Standing Committee as part of its agriculture inquiry. Particular issues that relate to both inquiries include incompatible land use planning, right to farm legislation, quality assurance measures for export and domestic markets and organic farming techniques.

1.1.3 Volume one of the report

The report addresses issues in three sections. The first (Chapter two) outlines the role of pesticides in the community and reflects upon the dependence of pesticides in agriculture to ensure economic and social sustainability. Chapter two also comments upon the social, economic and environmental implications of pesticide use in the community. Measures to manage pesticide use are considered in the second section (Chapter three), incorporating land use planning and a review of the legislative amendments proposed for the *Pesticides Act 1978*. The third section (Chapter four) examines alternatives to the use of pesticides.

Recommendations concerning the role of industry, interest groups and government at state and local level are outlined in Chapter two and Chapter three. Comment is made concerning the opportunities for research and development and best management techniques in Chapter three and Chapter four.

1.1.4 Volume two of the report

Contained in volume two of this report is the amended transcript version of evidence heard by the Standing Committee during the Committee's five public hearings for the inquiry.

INTRODUCTION
