

## **INQUIRY INTO ASPECTS OF AGRICULTURE IN NSW**

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# AUSTRALIAN GRAIN HARVESTERS ASSOCIATION INC

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Chairman & committee members.

AGHA has been at the forefront in advancing the interests of professional contract harvesters for over 30 years. Through consultation & negotiation with industry & state & federal government departments, AGHA has gained credibility from all by a common sense & practical approach as to our recommendations & modernising of policy & legislation to improve the efficiency & productive capacity of the grains industry & professional contract harvesting in Australia.

AGHA therefore submits to this Standing Committee on State Development the following.

## **1. Modernising & updating of the rule regarding the towing of fronts on a trailer behind headers in "Operators Guide to Oversize Vehicle Movements: Permits for Agricultural Vehicles".**

Harvesting machinery has become a good deal larger, more capacity & a great deal more expensive over the last 15 years. There can be no better example demonstrated of this than the header front itself. There are header fronts available now that are up to 15 metres wide. 15 years ago a 9 metre front was considered very wide. Nowadays, that is undersize.

Professional contract harvesters move from state to state, harvesting grain for their customers. In a normal season the value of grain harvested by contract harvesters is well over \$2.7b. These machines & fronts must travel on roads to fulfil their obligations to their customers. Obviously they are not transported in the work position but travel on trailers. The most efficient & practical method is towed behind the header.

AGHA's consultation with VicRoads has given them an understanding as to the requirements of modern harvesting machinery & therefore Victorian road rules were amended to reflect modern farming practices.

AGHA requests RTA make changes to the permit in respect of headers towing fronts on the road to read:

- "for the towing of header fronts, the length of the draw bar (measured from the centre of the hitch to the centre of the axle or axle group at the front of the trailer), the length of the front being carried, plus 0.5 metres."
- "that the length of the combination does not exceed 35 metres."

We also request the Combine Harvester Exemption Notice of 1998, table 1; Dimensions: Length of combination: should be updated to read 35 metres & the clauses in section 2.1.2 of the schedule be changed to reflect this modernisation.

These changes will standardise the road rules with Victoria as many professional contract harvesters travel to & from Victoria.

## **2. GM Canola Moratorium.**

The introduction of GM canola into Australia's grain industry will impose significant operational problems, create additional expense & ignite the very real predicament of legal liability for our members. It is well recognised from all those with any practical experience in grain growing & handling, that there will be an inevitable spread of GM canola into, our customers – the grain growers of Australia – farms & supply chain(s). Many of our clients have been quite adamant that if GM canola is released & our headers have been in any GM crops they do not want us on their properties no matter what hygiene assurances are given whether verbal or formal. This will result in a severe restriction in our terms of trade. Investment in this vital service industry (professional contract harvesting) will cease, without a guaranteed & an unequivocal legal liability exemption from all those in the supply chain of the Australian grains industry.

As previously stated many times, AGHA is not for, nor against the introduction of GM crops into Australia as long as it does not create additional expense, time constraints or impact adversely in any way whatsoever, on our business or our customers. It is indeed up to all those associated with the grains industry & the public to be aware of all issues as to the proposed introduction of GM canola & come to an agreement or acceptance of all aspects of GM canola onto the Australian grains industry before the moratorium is lifted. If the moratorium is to be lifted for the 2008 season, AGHA will recommend that our "Workable & Practical Operational Harvester Hygiene" be used as the baseline standard when harvesting in an environment of GM & non-GM canola along with the guaranteed & unequivocal legal liability exemption. We must have absolute certainty & confidence that we will not be sued or discriminated against for any spread or contamination of grains or property, when & if GM canola is introduced.

Until there is an unequivocal legal liability exemption granted, AGHA therefore recommends that the moratorium be extended.

## **3. Traineeships & skills training program.**

Due to the ever-changing agri-business environment, the need for skilled operators & the upgrading of the existing skills base has become of paramount importance. AGHA requests State government funding & ongoing support for the development & implementation of traineeships for young people wishing to enter the professional Contract Harvesting business as well as business management training for existing professional harvesters.

Offering traineeships & business management training to people who are attracted to the agricultural service industry, will help in solving the problem of young people leaving the rural areas merely because they don't see an opportunity or career for themselves in regional or rural NSW. Not only will it improve the growth of the local economies but most importantly will provide an opportunity to gain skills that will enhance their work prospects in many sectors. Traineeships may be offered through the TAFE system & specific operational training will be conducted by the relevant registered training organisations to give students the skills they will need to sustain their employment & or business proficiency.

It is of paramount importance that such a traineeship, along with a management training program as outlined, be implemented & supported so as professional contract harvesting can continue to contribute to the increased productive capacity of agriculture whilst at the same time improving the growth of rural & regional communities.

Authorised by:  
Peter Bradley  
President. AGHA.  
13<sup>th</sup> August 2007.