

Mr Peter Harris
Imported Process Tomato products
Productivity Commission
LB 2 Collins Street East
Melbourne VIC 3003
Via facsimile 03 9653 2199 (attention: Carole Gardner)

18 July 2013

Dear Mr Harris,

Re: Import of Processed Tomato Products

As a Victorian Senator, I write to support the combined industry submission on behalf of the Australian Processing Tomato Research Council, Australian Processing Tomato Growers, Billabong Produce and KAGOME Australia, to the Productivity Commission's safeguards inquiry into the Import of Processed Tomato Products.

Primary producers and manufacturers play a vital role in the economic and social fabric of the nation, and in maintaining Australia's food security. The food industry represents 21.4 per cent of the State's total manufacturing industry, and Victoria accounts for 26 per cent of Australia's food exports, generating approximately \$7 billion annually.

The food processing sector also plays an important part in supporting the economies of regional communities, with up to 28,000 people employed in food processing in regional Victoria, accounting for approximately 30% of Victoria's regional manufacturing jobs. Tomato production and processing is a key player in Victorian horticulture and food processing industry one I am proud to support.

Through meeting with growers, workers and industry, I am directly aware of the challenges faced by an industry so crucial to Victoria's future growth and prosperity. Many of these concerns were raised during the Senate Inquiry into Australia's Food Processing Sector 2012.

As demonstrated in the attached submission, the import of processed tomato products has had a significant negative effect on the domestic industry. The Commission's decision to accelerate the inquiry is appreciated.

Whilst recognising the importance of continued trade liberalisation, "*safeguard actions have been considered as a legitimate element of a free trade environment simply because you can have these kinds of sudden shifts which may not be easily encompassed*" (Mr Peter Harris, Economics Legislation Committee, pg 79 Hansard, 6 June 2013).

I trust that the Commission's findings will contribute to the development of a sustainable food industry for Victoria, and Australia as a whole. If I can assist you during the inquiry please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Yours sincerely,

Bridget McKenzie
Senator for Victoria