



The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP

Minister for Agriculture  
Federal Member for New England

Ref: MNMC2014-07498

Mayor Dr Felicity-ann Lewis  
President  
Australian Local Government Association  
8 Geils Court  
DEAKIN ACT 2600

<b>ALGA MAIL</b>
ITEM No:
DATE RECEIVED: 26.9.14
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Dear Mayor

Thank you for your letter of 25 August 2014 about motions arising from the recent National General Assembly of Local Government that are relevant to my portfolio.

I believe local governments play a crucial role in supporting rural and regional communities around Australia. As Minister for Agriculture, I appreciate hearing about the issues currently facing these communities.

Motion 52

I can understand the concern regarding ongoing food security and sustainability in Australia. However, I'd like to point out that Australia has a high level of food security – the vast majority of our fresh food is produced locally and we have a positive trade balance for processed foods. In fact, in 2014, we were ranked the 15th most food secure country on an assessment of 109 nations by the Economist Intelligence Unit.

The best way to maintain our domestic food security and contribute to global efforts to eradicate hunger is through a profitable and competitive agriculture sector in Australia. That is why we are developing an Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper, which will drive long-term policies and ensure Australia's food and agriculture sector remains a significant contributor to the national economy and local communities. One of my top priorities is getting better returns for farmers and examining unnecessary regulations and red tape that are reducing returns at the farmgate. As Motion 52 identifies, state and territory governments have principal responsibility for planning and land management.

In terms of the next steps for the White Paper process, I hope to release a Green Paper shortly in order to encourage further discussion of the reforms needed to lead Australian agriculture into the future. When the Green Paper is released, it will be available through the website [agriculturalcompetitiveness.dpmc.gov.au](http://agriculturalcompetitiveness.dpmc.gov.au). I encourage you to put ALGA's ideas into a submission to the Green Paper consultation process.

Motion 79

Potential environmental issues relating to the use of large mid-water trawl vessels (which are over 130m or have storage capacity over 1600 tonnes) are currently being investigated by two environmental expert panels. These panels are due to report to the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Greg Hunt MP, by 22 October 2014 and 27 March 2015 respectively. The Government is waiting for these panels to report to ensure that the best scientific evidence is available before making any decisions on the regulation of fishing activities. These decisions should not be rushed.

We recognise that there are concerns about the size of vessels that could operate in our fisheries. Australia is a world leader in fisheries management, which are sustainably managed with conservative catch limits. The Government's policy for a 'More Competitive and Sustainable Fisheries Sector' will ensure that the sector continues to be competitive and sustainable, and takes into account the interests of all Australians.

Thank you for raising these matters with me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'B. Joyce', written in a cursive style.

Barnaby Joyce MP

24 SEP 2014