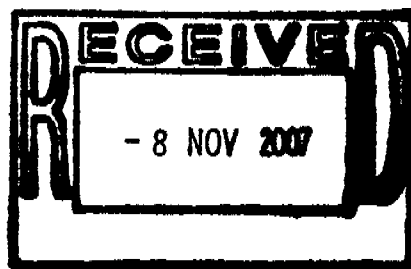


Community and Public Sector Union

Stephen Jones – National Secretary

Hon Mr Ian Callinan
 Commissioner
 Equine Influenza Inquiry
 PO Box 72
 Queen Victoria Building NSW 1230



The PSU Group of the Community and Public Sector Union (“CPSU”) represents workers in the Australian Public Service, the ACT Public Service, the Northern Territory Public Service, the telecommunications sector, call centres, employment services and broadcasting.

As the principal union covering the Australian Public Service (APS), the CPSU has considerable knowledge of and experience with the delivery of public services and in particular the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service. We believe that we are uniquely placed to provide a valuable insight into the operation of vital and effective public services. In preparing this letter, the CPSU has been informed by the experience and opinions of our members

CPSU welcomes the investigation into how equine influenza entered Australia.

Your inquiry is required to look into the circumstances that contributed to the outbreak of equine influenza in Australia and the need for any strengthened biosecurity procedures for quarantine management of imported horses.

CPSU asks that the inquiry, as part of its investigation, look very broadly into the administration of quarantine matters, and, importantly, that the inquiry look into whether a deregulated system involving the use of private veterinarians offers the best in terms of quarantine standards and public accountability. CPSU also asks that the inquiry review the adequacy of the resources applied to undertake the critical task of post-arrival equine quarantine inspection.

CPSU believes that a properly resourced and well trained public sector quarantine service will provide the public safety, confidence and accountability required in the regulation and management of imported horses.

Only APS employees are bound by the APS *Code of Conduct* and APS *Values* which underpin the high standards of accountability and ethical behaviour which characterises the Australian Public Service

According to the Australian Public Service Commission *State of the Service Report*, this ethical standard “goes beyond what might be expected elsewhere in the community; it reflects the fact that APS employees are paid by taxpayers and can exercise authority delegated by Parliament.”

Furthermore, *APS Values* require APS employees to act with fairness, impartiality and also require APS employees to perform their duties professionally and ethically and to be openly accountable for their actions, within the framework of Ministerial responsibility to the Government, the Parliament and the Australian public.

CPSU believes that this high standard of professional conduct, which is a source of pride to those associated with the Australian Public Service, has no equivalence in the private sector.

CPSU also believes it is regrettable that this high professional standard has to be increasingly defended from inroads by private contractors into pockets of activity in the delivery of public services.

No adequate whistleblower protection exists for this system. The current protections for public sector whistleblowers are inadequate and need to be strengthened to give AQIS staff the capacity to report cases of maladministration where there is a public interest principle. And contract vet staff are generally not covered by whistleblower legislation. This reinforces the fact that accountability mechanisms are not available in the same way that they would be if these officers were public servants.

Only public servants have a level of security and protection against pressure to act corruptly because they know they cannot be summarily or unfairly dismissed or victimised, but can rely on the established procedural fairness processes outlined in the Australian Public Service Act.

The flexibility and responsiveness of the modern APS means that there is no arguable reason why post-arrival equine quarantine services cannot be fulfilled by APS employees. The service must be adequately resourced with appropriately trained staff and have clear processes that are fully implemented by both staff and clients and monitored by AQIS staff to ensure that Australia has a quarantine service that has the confidence of the public.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Jones
National Secretary

07 November 2007