

INTERIM REPORT
Inquiry into Export Opportunities for Victorian Rural Industries

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TERMS OF REFERENCE TO THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES FOR VICTORIAN RURAL INDUSTRIES

Pursuant to the **Parliamentary Committees Act 1968**, the Economic Development Committee is required to inquire into, consider and report on the export opportunities for Victorian rural industries, with a particular emphasis on:

- The identification and demand for niche rural products in overseas markets;
- Victoria's strengths in niche rural industries;
- The level of support provided to niche rural industries by State and Commonwealth Governments;
- The use of information and communication technology;
- The role of statutory agriculture bodies in developing and promoting niche industries overseas; and
- The sale of Victorian food and agriculture products abroad and an examination of barriers or impediments.

The Committee is required to report to Parliament by 31 December 2001.

By resolution of the Legislative Council

Dated: 1 March 2000

INTERIM REPORT

1. Background

On 1st March 2000, the Economic Development Committee received a Terms of Reference by resolution of the Legislative Council, to inquire into and report on the export opportunities for Victorian rural industries. Specifically, the Committee is required to investigate:

- The identification and demand for niche rural products in overseas markets;
- Victoria's strengths in niche rural industries;
- The level of support provided to niche rural industries by State and Commonwealth Governments;

- The use of information and communication technology;
- The role of statutory agriculture bodies in developing and promoting niche industries overseas; and
- The sale of Victorian food and agriculture products abroad and an examination of barriers or impediments.

The Terms of Reference required the Committee to table a report in Parliament by 31 December 2001.

2. Purpose of Interim Report

The Committee has been conducting extensive regional and metropolitan hearings in relation to its Inquiry into Structural Changes in the Victorian Economy and Inquiry into Rural Export Opportunities.

The Committee's workload and ongoing investigations have precluded the Committee from being in a position to table a final report on the Rural Export Inquiry by 31 December 2001.

It is therefore necessary for the Committee to table this Interim Report which provides a brief overview of the Committee's activities to date. It is anticipated the final report will be completed and tabled during the 2002 Spring Session.

3. Progress Report

The Committee advertised its Terms of Reference in May 2001 in the major daily metropolitan papers and the Weekly Times. Fifteen written submissions have been received to date.

In January 2001, the Committee commenced some informal discussions with exporters in Mildura. In June 2001, further informal meetings were held with key Government bodies and other agencies in Sydney and Canberra.

Formal public hearings commenced in August 2001. To date the Committee has gathered evidence and visited exporters in the Wimmera district, central Victoria, north-east Victoria and Gippsland. Additional hearings are scheduled for Bendigo, Boort, Swan Hill and Kerang in mid December. Further public hearings will be conducted throughout Victoria in the New Year.

The Committee's final report will be tabled in the 2002 Spring Session.

26th November 2001