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**PROMINENT AGRICULTURAL ADVOCATES LOBBY CANBERRA TO REFORM POLICIES TO PROTECT MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR INDUSTRY**

Prominent agricultural advocates Tracey Anton of Victoria and Anne Daw of S.A., accompanied by National Vendors Declaration expert, Debbie Nulty of SA, and Lisa Chatwin from WA., have just spent 2 days in Canberra, having strategic meetings with a cross section of political leaders and advisors as well as key Agricultural Research experts. Daw, Anton and Nulty are part of a dedicated group of women advocates from around Australia, who have been campaigning together for 4 years on policy reform to improve our food and water security.

The viability of farm biosecurity plans, ground and surface waters, legacy contamination from industry and why agriculture land and dependent groundwater systems are not matters of National Environmental Significance were raised. Australian beef exporters have already lost \$millions due to chemical contamination. This included organochlorine residues found in beef in 1987, helix (chlorofluazuron) contamination impacting cattle in 1994, and endosulfan beef contamination in 1996. In former years, Japan refused any Australian wool that had been sprayed with extremely toxic and now banned Lucijet.

Daw believes EPAs all around Australia are not acting responsibly, and need to be put under scrutiny. Waste water from industry for irrigation appears to have "minimalistic" testing requirements. One example includes gas exploration waste water that was spread on prime agricultural land in the SE of SA. 300 contaminants, many highly toxic, were not included in the waste-water analysis. "This is totally unacceptable, and there urgently needs to be Federal oversight in place to call the EPA's in each state to account."

Gippsland farmer, Tracey Anton states, "farmers can survive fire, flood and drought but we cannot survive our land and water being poisoned." "Where is the level of security put in place to manage industrial pollution into our waterways putting viable agribusiness at risk? At the end of the day, farmers are still held accountable and liable if livestock and produce has been contaminated from unknown pollutants all because state government agencies condone ineffectual self-regulation by industry, while providing poor oversight of their practices."

Debbie Nulty states "If mining and petroleum activities are allowed to continue in the SE and around Australia, farmers will not be able to uphold their bio-security compliance according to the Livestock Production Assurance Program with underpins the National Vendors Declaration and Waybill as part of the new requirements being introduced in October. "

If farmland is the foundation of our economy, it should be a matter of priority that water quality and quantity that underpins this is protected. Groundwater sustains life, yet this resource is finite. With its vulnerability to abuse and misuse under existing State and Federal legislation, this resource should be accorded more protections. While bad government policy continues to have a negative impact on agribusiness, it is the privileged position that mining and some industry have over water priority and discharging of their wastewater that hurts farming the most.

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