



**Organic Industries**  
Voice of Australia's organic industries

## MEDIA STATEMENT

7 September 2023

### **Parliament puts on a show of support for certified organic industry**

MEMBERS of Parliament from across the political spectrum have joined international dignitaries and an array of the country's top certified organic producers for a historic event at Parliament House to mark the formation of the Parliamentary Friends of Australia's Organic Industry (PFAOI).

Recognising the certified organic industry's development into a major export earner and economic driver that contributes \$851m directly into the domestic economy, the barbecue lunch featured a range of certified organic produce and hosted the newly formed Organic Development Group (ODG).

The ODG brings together all of Australia's certification bodies and key industry groups into one forum and presents a united voice on issues such as the need for domestic regulation of the word "organic".

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Murray Watt, addressed the event and acknowledged the organic industry's position as a major contributor to Australia's image abroad as a producer of clean, green and high-quality produce and products.

"This industry is a core part of our agriculture sector," Minister Watt said.

"We haven't always agreed on everything to do with the organics sector, and there are some issues that we will continue working with you on, but as a government we've been particularly keen to focus on how we can be supporting the organics sector with its export efforts.

"I know there was a very productive meeting held this morning between representatives of the organics industry with the relevant departments to talk through some of the new and emerging export opportunities that we've been able to negotiate for our good organic products as well."

PFAOI Co-chair, Aaron Violi MP, said establishing the group was an important step in elevating the industry.

"I used to work in the industry selling organic food and I've seen firsthand how the industry has grown over the last few decades and it's an amazing industry that has big potential," Mr Violi said.

"It's already delivering a lot and there are things we need to do in this house to make sure that we can allow it to continue to grow."

Australian Organic Limited (AOL) hosted the function which was attended by more than 200 people including Minister for Trade and Tourism Don Farrell, Leader of the Nationals David Littleproud,



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MPs, Senators, the Swedish Ambassador, and representatives from the New Zealand High Commission, and the United States and French embassies.

AOL Chief Executive Officer, Niki Ford said it was timely recognition for producers.

"Today is an important day for us as an industry," Ms Ford said.

"September is traditionally Australian Organic Awareness Month, so it is great for us to be talking about the real reason you should be choosing certified organic products.

"Organic is regenerative, organic is sustainable and organic production systems positively contribute to climate resilience and biodiversity.

"Every organic operator who is certified has to go through a rigorous audit to substantiate their claims which underpins the importance of looking for certification marks.

"But without domestic regulation you can have as little as one ingredient and still claim organic on your packaging in Australia. Research has shown about one-third of consumers have reported being misled by deceptive packaging so truth in labelling is an important issue for our industry."

### **Organic Development Group**

The 11-member ODG, which includes all of Australia's certification bodies and major industry groups was formed to create a united voice to pursue domestic regulation of the word organic.

Producer and Organic Industries Australia Director, Ian James, said it's essential for the thousands of businesses that have gone through the process of certification.

"The whole industry is built around verification and certification of the organic claim, and this must be enforceable," Mr James said.

"We have come together to create the ODG with the realisation that the only way forward for the organic industry to achieve domestic regulation is to go forward together with one voice. Our future growth and prosperity are what is at stake."

National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia General Manager, Alex Mitchell said it showed a maturing of the organic sector.

"This is an unprecedented commitment of the whole of industry in participating in not only the approach to policy development, but also in advocacy, such as the show of force at the event today," Ms Mitchell said.

"It's also critical to acknowledge the importance of bringing all the industry bodies together to listen to government so everyone can develop a common language for industry advancement."

The ODG includes:



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- ACO Certification Ltd (ACO)
- Australian Organic Limited (AOL)
- Bio Dynamic Research Institute (BDRI)
- Certified Organic Biodynamic Western Australia (COBWA)
- National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia (NASAA)
- NASAA Certified Organic (NCO)
- Organic and Regenerative Investment Co-operative (ORICOOP)
- Organic Consumers Association Australia (OCAA)
- Organic Food Chain (OFC)
- Organic Industries of Australia (OIA)
- Southern Cross Certified (SXC)

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**Image caption:** (from left) Aaron Violi MP, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Murray Watt, AOL CEO Niki Ford, Leader of the Nationals, David Littleproud, and Dan Repacholi MP.

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