

## **Genetically Modified Organisms Control Amendment Bill 2009**

### **FACT SHEET**

The Tasmanian Government has administered a policy on gene technology and primary industries since 2001 which includes a ban on release of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) to the Tasmanian environment. The moratorium was deemed prudent because a parliamentary committee found there was potential for use of gene technology to impact negatively upon Tasmania's ability to market food domestically and abroad under a clean, green banner.

In 2003, the policy was reviewed. However, no cause for change was apparent. Government chose to continue as before, but also identified the need for specific legislation to support the policy and give firm effect to the ban. Accordingly, the Genetically Modified Organisms Control Act 2004 was introduced which prohibits dealings with GMOs in Tasmania unless authorised. The Act contains an expiry clause that at present allows the moratorium to be implemented until November 2009.

In July 2007, a Joint Select Committee comprising members from each of Tasmania's political parties commenced a second review of gene technology and Tasmanian primary industries. The Committee met sixteen times and considered many written and verbal submissions, as well as receiving numerous documents into evidence. The committee concluded its inquiry in August 2008, making 32 recommendations, including that the moratorium should be extended for another five years.

The Tasmanian Government responded to the Joint Select Committee's findings in November 2008 by reaffirming its support for the existing policy, agreeing to continue the moratorium for a further five years, and issuing an updated policy statement that describes how it intends to implement the bulk of the committee's recommendations. The policy statement includes a specific commitment to amend the Genetically Modified Organisms Control Act 2004 to facilitate the moratorium extension.

The *Genetically Modified Organisms Control Bill 2009* fulfils that commitment. It consists of a single amendment that extends the current expiry date of the Genetically Modified Organisms Control Act 2004 from November 2009 to November 2014