**Agricultural Levies Institute of Australia**

**Agricultural Levies Mismanaged by the Department and Levy Organisations**

The Chief Economist and Chief Executive Officer of the Agricultural Levies Institute of Australia, Mr Spiro Adamopoulos, has today spoken out about the inconsistent way farmers’ levies are being spent, following the release of the review into the structure and management of Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL).

“The HAL review has finally endorsed my concerns as a former manager of the Levies Revenue Service within the Federal Agriculture Department in Canberra”, Mr Adamopoulos said today. “It’s not only HAL that is a problem for levy payers”, explained the CEO. “There are structural problems within the Federal Department of Agriculture that lead to a failure to identify how agricultural levies are used once they leave the Consolidated Revenue Fund”.

“The Agricultural Levies Institute of Australia is determined to work for the interests of farmers in getting the best out of their levies and their government” said the CEO. “That’s our catchcry, ‘Partners with Producers’ and our objective is to uphold the interests of farmers”. “As the Business Manager for the Levies Revenue Service within the Department I expressed concerns to successive Departmental Secretaries about the management and use of levies by external bodies”. “Senior bureaucrats struggle with the complex nature of agricultural levies and there is very little expertise or understanding of the issues concerning farmers when it comes to their levies”.

“There are representative or prescribed levy bodies that haven’t been declared by the Minister”, Mr Adamopoulos told a gathering of members, “and these bodies purport to represent all levy payers”.

“Over half a billion dollars in agricultural levies are collected each year from farmers”, said the CEO. “I felt I had a responsibility to establish the Levies Institute to inject a level of expertise and understanding into this important area of agriculture which is not catered for and will never be catered for within the Federal Department”.

“We need to look at the way agricultural levies are imposed and collected in the interests of farmers”.

12 May 2014

**Further Enquiries:**

Media Liaison: 0401 414 981 - admin@leviesinstitute.com.au

For further information, visit Agricultural Levies Institute of Australia website at [www.leviesinstitute.com.au](http://www.leviesinstitute.com.au/)