

BLOG

I'm a GCA, get me out of here!

The [Efra Committee farmgate inquiry](#) is shaping up to be some excellent televised entertainment. Who needs reality TV when you have Neil Parish et al stopping at nothing to get to the bottom of what is really going on with farmgate prices?

And the latest episode – featuring Groceries Code Adjudicator Christine Tacon – was one of the best yet.



It was, admittedly, somewhat uncomfortable viewing. And it revealed absolutely nothing about what is going on with farmgate prices. Because, as we all know (don't we?), the Groceries Code isn't really to do with meat and dairy farmers. Or pricing.

Still, the Committee members made a valiant effort to make Tacon answer questions on farmgate prices and whether the GCA should be involved. And Tacon was admirable in her ability to keep calm in the face of such blatant misunderstanding about what her job actually is.

If I had to criticise her performance, it would only be to ask why she agreed to appear at an inquiry into farmgate prices in the first place, and why she didn't flag up in advance that this was all very much out of her remit.

Oh, hang on. She did.

Turns out that prior to her appearance, Tacon was asked to submit written evidence on the issue 'How effective is the regime established under the Groceries Code Adjudicator Act 2013 in ensuring fair and stable prices for dairy and meat producers?'

In said written evidence – which the Committee received in October - she very politely pointed out that the regime set up under the GCA Act was not established to tackle fair and stable prices for dairy and meat producers. And she had neither the powers to do so, nor the ability to get those powers.

She also reminded them (lest they had forgotten) that she had already given evidence at a previous Efra Committee inquiry – where she had explained that the code only deals with direct suppliers to retailers, and does not cover price setting.

So we'll have to mark this one down as an error on the part of the producers. Let's hope the Efra Committee have an easier job getting their head around the complex factors influencing farmgate prices than they did trying to understand the role of the GCA.

Carina Perkins



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