

From: Rosie Jones <rosiejones1955@hotmail.com>
Sent: Friday, 13 October 2017 10:35 AM
To: BRT
Subject: Submission to Inquiry into Blueberry Rust in Tasmania

I, Rosemary Anne Jones (formerly Buttery) wish to make the following submission to the Inquiry into Blueberry rust in Tasmania.

I am a certified organic grower with 5000 bushes located at Deep Bay near Cygnet. I am a former Senior Manager at the University of Tasmania. I established my plantation, have been growing and involved in the blueberry industry in Tasmania for 18 years having commenced involvement in the industry and growing and exporting blueberries whilst still employed at the University of Tasmania. Blueberry growing, producing and exporting is now my core business having retired from the University in 2007. I am certified organic with NASAA. I trade as Organic Blue Sky Berries ABN 53498288401. Being certified organic I have increasing demand for my fruit which is of superior quality due to the many quality control measures I put in place. I export 99% of my produce interstate.

I would be happy to appear before the Inquiry if required to expand on the points I make below.

I now wish to address the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry.

1. The actions taken by Biosecurity Tasmania to address the 2014 and 2016 outbreaks of blueberry rust.

I state the following:

The decision made by Biosecurity Tasmania with respect to the 2014 outbreak of blueberry rust, to eradicate the incursion was correct.

The decision made by Biosecurity Tasmania in relation the the 2016 incursion, not to adopt an eradication strategy but to try to contain the outbreak:

1a. was incorrect,

1b. was based on advice provided to them which was seriously flawed, eg the Macquarie Franklin report is full of seriously inaccurate figures and information (which I would be happy to expand upon) for one example. No attempt was made by Biosecurity Tasmania to corroborate information in this report,

1c. was influenced by pressure brought on them by the owners of the infected property to which they bowed which was not only unprofessional but arguably corrupt,

1d. did not accurately determine or consider the effects of a 'containment' strategy on other growers, their employees and markets.

1e. was based on a serious lack of knowledge about the blueberry industry in Tasmania including the names of all growers and the number of plants each of those growers manages,

1f. was based on a very serious inability of Biosecurity staff to seek and understand comprehensive and relevant information which should have been taken into consideration before making a decision to either eradicate or contain the 2016 outbreak of rust

2. Past and present regulatory requirements relating to the blueberry industry in Tasmania;

2a. I am unaware of past and present regulatory requirements if there are any except those created by Biosecurity Tasmania and their decision to contain and not eradicate the 2016 incursion of rust eg export requirements due to Tasmania now not being recognised as blueberry rust free - a direct result of the flawed decision to contain and not eradicate.

3. The future of Tasmania's blueberry industry, including the impacts of previous, current and any future outbreaks of blueberry rust;

3a. The future of Tasmania's blueberry industry was extremely bright.

3b. There are now serious issues created by BT that have changed the bright outlook to one of doubt and lack of confidence in it.

3c. One of these serious issues is that many in the industry were planning expansion due to demand however due to BT's inactions, unsound decisions and decisions taken favouring one grower at the expense of so called smaller growers, confidence in BT has declined to non existent and therefore those considering expansion have not done so and put their plans on hold until the outcome of this Inquiry.

3d. Those that have put expansion plans on hold unanimously desire this Inquiry to determine that BT's decision to contain and not eradicate the 2016 outbreak of rust was flawed and based on incorrect information which they made no attempt to corroborate.

3e. Those that are both growers wishing to remain at their current size and growers with significant expansion plans which are now on hold, trust that this Inquiry will determine that there is a serious inability of BT to manage our blueberry industry

3f. Those stakeholders mentioned in 3e (except of course the grower at the heart of the rust problem who has already reaped the rewards of BT's flawed containment and not eradication decision) also very seriously trust that once all issues are fully and accurately uncovered, the Inquiry will determine that there is only one possible outcome for them to arrive at and that is, to recommend an immediate reversal of BT's decision to contain and not eradicate the incursion of blueberry rust in 2016 and to

recommend an eradication program be implemented immediately for the sake of the blueberry industry and biosecurity in general in Tasmania.

3g. The impact of introducing an eradication strategy, not one of containment will not have as serious an impact on the largest affected property as previously reported by BT as, BT completely failed to investigate and accurately determine all options for eradication procedures. Eradication procedures which would be required on the largest affected property would result in minimal disruption to their business but again there has been a complete failure by BT to accurately determine effective and minimally disruptive activities to eradicate blueberry rust. These procedures are known amongst other growers and stakeholders in the industry and have been reported to Biosecurity Tasmania who have pig headedly ignored such representations and suggestions from those growers and stakeholders.

3h. This Inquiry will ,we trust, uncover these minimally disruptive options and take them into consideration when making their determinations and consequent report.

3i. Currently the number 1 risk to the blueberry industry in Tasmania is the existence, incompetence and power of Biosecurity Tasmania.

4. The capacity of Biosecurity Tasmania to manage blueberry rust outbreaks and other risks into the future;

4a. The capacity of Biosecurity Tasmania to manage blueberry rust outbreaks and other risks into the future has been clearly demonstrated (by their past actions and treatment of stakeholders affected by these issues), to be, what can be only described as 'clearly non existent '

4b.I would be happy to appear before the enquiry to expand on this point.

4c. Biosecurity Tasmania (BT)has demonstrated disdain towards growers other than from the most affected property,

4d. BT have acted on information and recommendations made to them which was seriously flawed and which they made no attempt to corroborate,

4e. BT have refused to release information which they made decisions upon - to affected parties,

4f. BT have made very limited attempts to inform all blueberry growers of issues surrounding their decisions (they cannot even identify all growers in Tasmania. I know of growers with collectively many thousands of plants they don't even know about and seemingly don't care to know about and,

4g. BT has also shown an extremely serious lack of diligence and capacity to manage, a wide range of Biosecurity issues by not attempting to comprehensively and factually uncover the source and cause of the 2016 outbreak of rust and take appropriate action.

Were infected plants brought into Tasmania, undetected by Biosecurity Tasmania and if so how and what has been done to ensure it cannot happen again?

4h. Additionally Biosecurity Tasmania has demonstrated that they bow down to pressure from a large grower and make decisions that economically favour that grower at the cost of Tasmanian Biosecurity in general instead of looking after the general Biosecurity of Tasmania, which they are charged to do. This is an extremely important point and demonstrates that they are definitely incapable of managing Tasmanian Biosecurity issues in general.

4i. There should be very serious consideration given to the fact that stakeholders financially affected by the flawed decisions of Biosecurity Tasmania may have a case for a Class Action against the Tasmanian Government.

5. Any other matters incidental thereto.

5a. The demonstrated lack of ability to professionally undertake management of biosecurity issues in general must result in the question 'should Biosecurity Tasmania be disbanded and replaced with an authority which can manage biosecurity issues so crucial to Tasmania's clean green, disease free reputation which affects many many different agricultural pursuits?

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