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**THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION B COMMITTEE
MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART ON FRIDAY
13 JULY 2018**

BLUEBERRY RUST IN TASMANIA

Mr LLOYD KLUMP, BIOSECURITY TASMANIA, WAS CALLED AND EXAMINED.
DIEDRE WILSON, DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES, PARKS, WATER AND
ENVIRONMENT, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS
EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Dean) - Lloyd, thanks very much again. The committee did indicate we might need to ask you to come back. We make no apologies for that.

Deidre, I would be very surprised if you have not given evidence to one of these committees before.

Ms WILSON - I am trying to recall. I do not know that I have.

CHAIR - Maybe I need to simply indicate to you that in this environment you are obviously protected. Parliamentary privilege applies while you are here and giving evidence, but once you leave it no longer applies. We will have a number of questions, which we will direct to Lloyd right through this process, and Lloyd may then want you to come in on it. It is a matter for Lloyd.

Lloyd, is there anything you would like to say before we start questioning? Is there anything additional since you were here last time? I know there was another outbreak.

Mr KLUMPP - We can provide a supplementary update around the other infected property. In summary though, I can quickly summarise.

We undertake statewide surveys as part of the program. In May, the statewide survey detected another property suspected with blueberry rust. That was confirmed on 6 June. There is a diagnostic process to go through. This ensures you are confident about what you are dealing with and you are not jumping at shadows. That was confirmed on 6 June that property in the Waratah/Wynyard municipality had blueberry rust.

CHAIR - What was the date again?

Mr KLUMPP - 6 June. It was in Waratah/Wynyard municipality.

Mr FINCH - It was found on 5 May.

Mr KLUMPP - There were 600 plants on the property. That is infected property number 5. It is a small pick-your-own facility and it supplies local businesses. It does not export.

Mr FINCH - Not organic?

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Mr KLUMPP - Not certified organic, but they use organic principles. That detection is part of the surveillance program. The surveillance program has two functions. One is to ensure we understand where the disease is and take appropriate actions. As importantly, probably even more importantly, the surveillance program is part of our market assurance process to keep markets open for the industry and in particular the organic industry.

That was confirmed on 6 June. On 7 June, we advised the peak bodies directly. I individually called those peak bodies to alert them to it and we circulated an email to all the known growers on our list on that same day.

CHAIR - Was that 7 June?

Mr KLUMPP - 7 June that email went out.

Mr FINCH - How many known growers, Lloyd? What does your list contain now?

Ms WILSON - I will look that up and I will be able to tell you.

Mr KLUMPP - That was that incident. The onset of cold weather means this disease becomes inactive and diagnostics are difficult after that. Our surveillance program runs in that period where the disease is most likely to be active.

CHAIR - Are you saying it was in your statewide survey you picked this up, your ground staff identified it? Is it a concern that it takes your staff to identify it? What is the onus on the grower to ensure their plants are disease-free?

Mr KLUMPP - There is a requirement to notify of suspicion under the Plant Quarantine Act. People have to understand, know and suspect. This disease can look very much like other things that are common. Occasionally, the disease does not express; if the weather is cold, for example. It sometimes takes a bit of expertise to find it. I am not aware of the circumstances of this one. We have had other properties who have, I think it was IP2 or 3, did notify us and that is how we found it. There is an obligation.

Ms RATTRAY - IP2?

Mr KLUMPP - Yes.

CHAIR - Are you able to identify how long the disease might have been on that property?

Mr KLUMPP - Not specifically. Given the property was surveyed earlier -

CHAIR - How much earlier?

Mr KLUMPP - It was surveyed in the previous surveillance period - it would have been last year. Nothing was found. The level of infection on the property suggested it had been there for some weeks but that is guesswork.

CHAIR - Rust is seen as a horrible disease. It is said to be just as devastating to them as the fruit fly situation we recently had. Is it a position that not enough is known about the blueberry rust, the education is not strong enough, and you are not putting it out there?

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Mr KLUMPP - I would say a couple of things to that. There is still a lot unknown, as there is with other pests and disease. Research is still happening on blueberry rust, here and internationally. There is a lot to know. There are many places that happily exist in the presence of blueberry rust. I do not know the exact number but New South Wales' production percentages have increased by the hundreds in the time they have had blueberry rust. That is over the 10 to 15 years it has been in New South Wales. I believe sales of Tasmanian blueberries have jumped by something in the order of 20 per cent in the last year or so. The disease is manageable. The real challenge with blueberry rust is for organic growers.

CHAIR - A number of people have said the way you reacted, the work done on it, the information provided in the recent fruit fly outbreak was commendable. However, we do not seem to have that same attitude with blueberry rust. As you have indicated, it can be devastating for the organic growers, and wipe out their industries. Why do we have that difference of approach to blueberry growers when blueberry rust is a critical situation?

Mr KLUMPP - I don't know that there is a different attitude. There is the appropriate response to the pest and diseases we deal with. We know fruit fly shuts down our markets and has shut down our markets in the face of what happened recently.

CHAIR - So does the rust with blueberries.

Mr KLUMPP - No, it hasn't.

CHAIR - It could.

Mr KLUMPP - It hasn't. We have worked very hard to make sure it hasn't. There are three jurisdictions, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, free of blueberry rust. They accept all our products at the moment because of the surveillance we do and the arrangements we put in place. Granted, there is extra burden to do that but it has not shut down those markets. I am not underplaying the significance of the disease. We take it very seriously but we have to apply the appropriate evidence-based decision making.

It is clear to us that fruit fly is eradicable. We believe we will eradicate it, if we haven't already. The science and the evidence strongly suggests that blueberry rust is not eradicable; the nature of a rust disease, that microscopic spore that spreads so easily and cannot be traced. All the scientific evidence suggests eradication of blueberry rust is very difficult, if not impossible, unless under certain circumstances.

Mr WILLIE - On eradication, what processes took place in the latest incursion? How is that being managed?

Mr KLUMPP - Let us get our terminology right. We have one incursion and that is the event we have now. We have another detection within that incursion. Are you asking how that infected property is managed?

Mr WILLIE - Yes, how is that being contained and what actions have been taken?

Mr KLUMPP - In much the same way as we do with others. We work with the property owner to develop a property management plan, which takes the individual characteristics of that

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property into consideration in order to minimise the biosecurity risk that property imposes. I do not have the detail in front of me but that plan would have things such as: what is done with any infected material; what restrictions are placed on movement of materials; access to the property; and treatments required in order to move fruit off the property. All those sorts of things in order to minimise the biosecurity risk.

The owners of that property should be highly commended for what they had done prior to it. This demonstrates the difficulty of blueberry rust. The owners of that property had done everything perfectly in biosecurity management for their property. They had a really good biosecurity plan for the property, they had signage, they controlled who came on or off the property, yet they became infected. That is the nature of blueberry rust.

Mr FINCH - Deciduous or evergreen?

Mr KLUMPP - I think they are deciduous.

Mr WILLIE - They seemed very willing to work with Biosecurity.

Mr KLUMPP - They are understandably distressed. This is important to them but they have been very cooperative and worked well with us.

Mr WILLIE - Given the small scale of that farm, do you think there might have been an opportunity to trial some different methods? Do you see scope for more of that scientific testing to take place while we are in this containment phase?

Mr KLUMPP - Yes. We are doing that. This applies to all the properties. We have the ability to try to free that property of the disease. That is what we are doing with each of the properties. IP2 may be clear of the disease as well. There is a process we go through and there is a process of retesting to prove freedom. It may well be possible for us to gradually move each of these properties back to freedom. Ultimately, that is part of the strategy. We want to contain the disease as much as we can. If we can continue to do that, then the end of result may well be eradication of the disease, but without the drastic and dramatic measures which we do not believe the cost benefit is there for destroying plants and businesses and the rest of it. That is one option.

It may well be, given the nature of this disease, we cannot eradicate the disease and that we continue to find smouldering little areas of disease. So the other work we are doing is called transition to management. We are helping the industry get to the point where they can exist in the face of the disease, through market access arrangements, through appropriate controls. This is effectively happening in all the other jurisdictions, other than those without blueberry rust.

Mr WILLIE - If we could go back to the five different incursions, can you outline some of the scientific trials?

Mr KLUMPP - Five infected properties.

Mr WILLIE - Five infected properties, sorry. Can you outline some of the different trials?

Mr KLUMPP - I would not call them trials - they are control measures. There is essentially two. There is the one you mentioned, whereby there is stripping of infected material, reducing infected load and doing everything you can to reduce the amount of infection on the property simply

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by physical removal. That is much easier with deciduous obviously than evergreen. Even this is really difficult, because despite the fact we talk about deciduous plants, not every plant drops every leaf. The leaves do drop on the ground and can be really difficult to clean up. So there is that form - the simple physical removal of infected material.

Then there is the other form where there are chemical controls placed in order to manage the disease and again suppress to the point, hopefully, where you can clean it up. That is the case with IP2.

Mr WILLIE - We have had evidence of other methods. Are you trialling defoliation through spraying, electrolysed water, or any of those sorts of methods?

Mr KLUMPP - No, we are not. There is no evidence for us at the moment and as I said before, these plans are developed with the owners with the particular circumstance. If a grower would like to try that, then we would be more than happy to do it, but we are not going to impose costs and all of that on a grower.

Mr WILLIE - I am not suggesting that. If a grower were willing to offer their farm up to some sort of scientific trial, then you would be happy to do that?

Mr KLUMPP - We would be more than happy to do that.

Ms RATTRAY - I wanted to explore the notification. If you want to follow on then, that will be fine. I will wait, Chair.

Mr KLUMPP - Sorry, can I clarify Deidre has pointed out to me we have - was it 70 growers?

Ms WILSON - We informed just over 50 growers.

Mr KLUMPP - I will clarify the infection was confirmed at the end of May - I think I said 6 June, but it was 7 June where we let everybody know and it was 6 June where all the requirements came into place for that IP.

Ms RATTRAY - That is where I want to go.

CHAIR - We will come back to you in a minute, Tania.

Mr FINCH - With the number you have given us there, we have heard evidence before we were not sure how many blueberry growers there were in Tasmania. With the current issue, they are becoming more aware. We are all more aware of how many there are. Is that the number of growers? I thought there might have been even more. What is your assessment of how many properties might be growing blueberries for commercial distribution, either to local shops or the national or international markets?

Mr KLUMPP - We believe there are probably about 70 and we can classify them in three ways. There are those that export fruit to other jurisdictions. We have worked toward market access. There is a group of those you might consider commercial. Strictly defined, it is anybody who sells blueberries, including to local markets or pick-your-own growers. Then there is a whole group of others that may have a few blueberries in their backyard. That long tail is something we are not completely on top of.

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In terms of the export and commercial growers, there is that number of over 50. I do not know the exact number. Then there is a bit of tail. I would be surprised if there aren't one or two commercial growers we are not aware of. It is one of the major problems we have with horticulture industries generally, not only in Tasmania but across the country. There is a national traceability working group I sit on, looking at horticulture traceability and how we may solve this problem for the nation. It is not only a problem for the blueberry industry, it is a problem for all our horticulture industries.

Mr FINCH - If you found out there were other growers, would you be proactive in putting them on your list and making sure you have contact with them and knowledge of them?

Mr KLUMPP - That happened in the last couple of days. A grower sent me an email saying, 'I'm sorry, I am not on the list'. I immediately had my operations manager contact that person, have a discussion with them and we added them to our list.

Mr FINCH - Lloyd, you said blueberry rust is not eradicable. I think that might be -

Mr KLUMPP - That is not quite what I said.

Mr FINCH - Yes, you did. You said blueberry rust is not eradicable.

Ms ARMITAGE - You did, I have taken it down too.

Mr KLUMPP - Maybe I should qualify that.

CHAIR - I had the question down as well. Thank you for asking it.

Ms RATTRAY - Looks like it is five against one, Lloyd.

CHAIR - Because we have been given contrary information.

Mr KLUMPP - I am sorry if I misspoke. Any disease or pest is eradicable if you undertake measures that are unrealistic and impracticable. If you take the extreme, we could take every blueberry plant out of Tasmania - I am being a bit facetious. You could take every blueberry plant out of Tasmania for a period and you would eradicate the disease. Every disease is eradicable. What we talk about is technical feasibility of eradication. We assess that based on the information we have at the time, such as distribution and nature of the disease, those sorts of factors. It is technically feasible to eradicate blueberry rust, but it is a very difficult thing to do because of the nature of the disease. You would need enormous resources to do it and you would have to impose an enormous burden on the industry. You probably would destroy the industry by attempting to do it in the way we have been asked to do it.

The other consideration of eradication programs is the cost-benefit of eradicating. There is no point eradicating a disease if you also eradicate the industry. Our decision-making is about that, the technical feasibility of eradication. There are some people who would argue it is not technically feasible to eradicate blueberry rust, and they have a fairly strong argument. Is it a valuable thing to do? Is it going to create more value and protect the industry? The answer to that is clearly, no. It would destroy the industry.

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I will give you a possible scenario, understanding that decisions are made at the time with the information you have. If, when we found IP2, we had decided to tear the plants of IP1 and IP2 as we did in 2014, then we found IP3, IP4 and IP5 and do the same thing, a decision is made that we go to the next stage of an eradication program for a disease like this. We attempt to contain it to a point and then control it, maybe we can gradually drive it back, with eradication a possibility. In the meantime, we protect the industry and work with the industry in the event you cannot do that. You transition the industry to management in the face of the disease. The end result of that is still having an industry.

Mr FINCH - Tell me, Lloyd, about that decision to move from eradication to containment? Can I have some idea of the chemistry that might have unfolded amongst the players in that decision? It would have been a dramatic step to go from one form of dealing with the situation to turning that on its head and moving to another form, understanding there would be solid implications in that decision? I understand the players and how that unfolded.

Mr KLUMPP - You alluded to one form and another. If you are talking about 2014 versus 2016, they are two very different responses. We understood the pathways in the 2014 response. We knew where the disease came from through tracing back and tracing forward. It was in the nursery supply chain. The documentation was there, we had control of those pathways, we knew the end point and we believed we had things contained. It is a very different circumstance to the disease suddenly popping up, you cannot trace it, you do not know where it is, you do not know where it has been, where it came from, and you do not know where it went. We were faced with that challenge from day one.

Mr FINCH - In 2016?

Mr KLUMPP - Yes. A lot of consideration was given to eradicability. The first weeks were about trying to understand. It was about surveillance and trying to trace back and trace forward and work out what the situation was. The decision-making process is a legal one. The secretary is the decision-maker. The secretary does so with the advice of the technical experts, scientists, economists and others.

In terms of the dynamics, a whole lot of work happens. There is all that gathering of information and surveillance of the disease. There is the consultation with various scientists and other jurisdictions and that happened in those first few weeks. Given all that intelligence, information and advice, the secretary decided the process of containment was the appropriate one.

Mr FINCH - The secretary's decision comes after consultation with the minister?

Mr KLUMPP - You would have to ask the secretary.

Mr FINCH - At the gathering, where the decision is made, would the minister have been present?

Mr KLUMPP - I cannot answer that question, I don't know.

CHAIR - Was the management decision made because of the size of the property involved? The IP1, 2, 3 and 4 are smaller properties. We come into IP6, I think it is, which was Costa Group -

Mr KLUMPP - Yes, that is right.

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CHAIR - It was a large property. Did that impact on the decision to manage, as opposed to eradication?

Mr KLUMPP - It would have been a factor. Cost-benefit is one of the factors pinned to these. The nature of the outbreak is more the factor, the nature of what is on that infected property and what is around that infected property; the circumstances and situation. They are all factors. The size of the property is one of those elements in all of that consideration.

Ms WILSON - I think he summarised it well, it is about the outbreak itself.

Ms RATTRAY - Lloyd, I would like to explore your advice to the growers a little bit further. I am a tad confused about how there were only 50 growers notified. Have you got a list of the people and properties you inspect?

Mr KLUMPP - All of those are notified.

Ms RATTRAY - My information tells me that is not quite right. Have you got a list of growers?

Mr KLUMPP - Yes.

Ms RATTRAY - How many are on that list?

Mr KLUMPP - I would have to go back and check.

Ms RATTRAY - I thought I had it with me but we have only found one with 18.

Mr WILLIE - Could you take that on notice and come back to us.

Mr KLUMPP - Certainly.

Ms RATTRAY - That would be excellent.

Mr KLUMPP - I can tell you everybody on that list was notified.

Ms RATTRAY - I have some differing information. That is why I am a bit confused about how the list of people who are inspected and how the people are advised about an alert. We explored the concerns on that in early January. I know of one property found out on 6 July on the *Tasmanian Country Hour*, ABC radio, listening to Trish MacFarlane. They are an organic certified and they also -

Mr KLUMPP - Ms MacFarlane was on my list.

Ms RATTRAY - No, it was not Ms MacFarlane. No, it wasn't.

Ms ARMITAGE - She was speaking on the radio.

Ms RATTRAY - She was speaking on the radio and she provided some information and there was a grower listening.

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Mr KLUMPP - It was my understanding everybody who is on our surveillance lists were on my email list. I am not saying everybody, every grower out there, was on that list.

Ms RATTRAY - My question is, the growers are inspected on that regularly three times a year?

Mr KLUMPP - That is right.

Ms RATTRAY - Three times a year and obviously if you have gone through the process of being certified organic, that is a reasonably -

Mr KLUMPP - I will also take that on notice and go back and double check my email list.

Ms RATTRAY - My concern is that we still have people falling through the cracks.

Mr KLUMPP - I do not know whether emails get changed and maybe ones bounce. I can go back and check. It is certainly my understanding everybody who is on our surveillance list was on my email list.

Ms RATTRAY - I am very interested in that. You talked earlier in a response to Mr Willie's question that market assurance program -

Mr KLUMPP - Market access.

Ms RATTRAY - Market access, sorry. That is the management.

Mr KLUMPP - In order to access those offshore markets, those jurisdictions require us to undertake certain things. One of those is the surveillance program and we report to those jurisdictions surveillance results. The other is property certification. In some circumstances our staff will certify they have been to that property as part of that surveillance property and not found anything. That allows those properties access to those markets.

Ms RATTRAY - Recently in some previous evidence, we were informed about changes to the Interstate Certification Arrangement System in ICA-29, the bringing product into Tasmania. There had been some changes and the first incursion was from a Victorian nursery. Can you give the committee some update about where we are with the biosecurity measures around the import of plants?

Mr KLUMPP - Again, this is a more general issue we have at the moment nationally we are dealing with, not just related to blueberry rust. The ICA - the interstate certification arrangement system - is a system meant to provide pre-market assurance of pest freedom. The idea is enterprises, growers, packing houses, et cetera, undertake a quality assurance arrangement that they do certain things to minimise the biosecurity risk in that any product leaving that enterprise is free of a pest or disease. It is part of the ICA system. We have had a number of incidences over the last few years in which that system has not worked the way it should and blueberry rust was one of those. The Victorian nursery was certified under the ICA system.

Ms RATTRAY - They were not doing their job?

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Mr KLUMPP - We don't believe so.

Ms RATTRAY - The Victorian government admitted there were some problems with their processes.

Mr KLUMPP - They had been certified, that is a breakdown in the system. We found a similar problem with fruit fly. We have less confidence in those certificates. We used to have confidence the product coming into our state was free of pests or diseases. We are doing some work nationally, not only in Tasmania. The domestic market access working group, as part of the biosecurity system, is doing some work on the problems. Is it a matter of compliance; is it a matter of system; why are these things happening?

Ms RATTRAY - Or are they lazy?

Mr KLUMPP - Or are they lazy, that is right. For us, in Tasmania, I will be blunt here, we are worried about the motivation of other jurisdictions to look after us.

Ms RATTRAY - Get rid of the competition, Lloyd? I can say that, perhaps you can't.

Mr KLUMPP - We are seriously looking at that in Tasmania and in other jurisdictions, in acknowledgement that the system has some problems. We want to look after our own interests. We are on the receiving end. Rather than delivering pests and diseases we want a robust system and we will continue to strive for that robust system.

CHAIR - Mr Willie wanted to return to a previous matter. As to importation, we have Victoria clear from rust now. Is that right?

Mr KLUMPP - Of blueberry rust, yes, recognised as clear.

CHAIR - South Australia is clear? As I understand it, they have a good regime in place.

Ms ARMITAGE - Wasn't everyone but Queensland and New South Wales?

CHAIR - I am coming to that. It would seem New South Wales and Queensland are questionable areas.

Mr KLUMPP - They are infested.

CHAIR - Is it reasonable for us not to bring in blueberry products from New South Wales and Queensland?

Mr KLUMPP - We don't unless -

CHAIR - Should that be ruled out? Should a clear direction be given that there will not be any plants or material brought from New South Wales and Queensland to Tasmania?

Mr KLUMPP - You could say that about any product.

CHAIR - We are talking about blueberry rust. It could be devastating to our industry here.

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Mr KLUMPP - The principle our biosecurity system, both nationally and internationally, is built upon is about least restrictive measures on trade. We apply import requirements for certain things to happen before something can come here. What you are describing is one extreme, and we do have products we do not allow in because the risk cannot be managed. There are some products for which we believe the risk can be managed. In the case of blueberries, in the same way Western Australia, Victoria and South Australia accept our blueberries now because we are managing the risk of sending infected product to them, we are asked to do the same thing. We can only place restrictions where we can demonstrate evidence that the risk cannot be managed.

The weakness in this system is the ICA system. We impose requirements on industry to do certain things with blueberries so the fruit does not bring blueberry spores here. The weakness in the system is that in order to minimise the burden on industry, the exporters bringing stuff into Tasmania and our own retail industries and nursery industries and so on, we have these systems aimed toward pre-border clearance of these pests and diseases. One of the considerations may be whether that system is robust enough, in which case we may decide to withdraw that for particular products, perhaps even blueberries.

CHAIR - I think you are reaching the position I was trying to make clear. Why would we take the added risk in bringing material from New South Wales and Queensland into the state? There is an added risk that does not apply to Victoria and South Australia. Why do we need to bring material in from those other two states? Is it happening and how much has been brought in?

Mr KLUMPP - I cannot answer that last question. The blueberry material is brought in for a number of reasons, and our own industry needs genetic material. There is still consumer demand for blueberry products in the state. Our retail industries still require some access to that fruit. Processing industries require some access to that sort of fruit. Our job is to try to minimise the risk that material coming into the state poses, in terms of genetic material and fruit, et cetera. It comes back to that business of zero risk. The ultimate way of doing so is stopping anything coming into the state, but that would start to cripple various parts of our industries. We try to apply those least restrictive measures to control the risk.

CHAIR - You keep moving back to other items and materials. We are talking about blueberry rust only here. I think you have answered -

Ms RATTRAY - Chair, can I ask something about New South Wales?

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr KLUMPP - I might clarify, we have import requirements, which do restrict infected material coming into the state. You cannot bring a blueberry plant into the state without -

CHAIR - It hasn't worked, has it? We had infected plants brought in from Victoria, for instance, and that was the first outbreak. It hasn't worked. I think you said we may need to have stronger regulations in place. Are you moving in that direction for stronger -

Mr KLUMPP - That system is being reviewed at the moment.

CHAIR - Right. We will go to Ms Armitage.

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Ms ARMITAGE - You were talking about importation of produce from New South Wales. What do you think about the risk of a lot of the pickers, the backpackers, coming from New South Wales? What do you think of the risk of it coming in with the pickers?

Mr KLUMPP - That is one of the major challenges with rust. We can restrict the produce when we identify the risk. We have requirements and restrictions on infected material. If somebody goes to an infected farm in New South Wales and comes here, we have no control over that.

Ms WILSON - We are encouraging it.

Mr KLUMPP - Yes. The protection for us in those sorts of things is as I mentioned: having good farm hygiene plans and good biosecurity. IP5 demonstrates that even with the best of that in place, there is still a risk.

Ms ARMITAGE - We were advised in the last hearings that while some farms will not have pickers from New South Wales, we took evidence from some that did not care and said they come from New South Wales and they are happy with it. I guess it is a challenge for you. How are you dealing with that?

Mr KLUMPP - We have no control over people.

CHAIR - Shouldn't our regulations be much stronger? We are trying to protect a developing industry now marketing to the world and the organic growers. Shouldn't we look at some control in that regard?

Ms ARMITAGE - It is putting the whole industry at risk.

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr KLUMPP - From my point of view, as a biosecurity manager, I would love to have that power, but I do not.

CHAIR - We are talking about regulations and putting it into -

Mr KLUMPP - There are regulations and things in place around infected materials and what people can do with those infected materials. If they have spores on their coats and boots and hats and things, you cannot identify it and you do not know it is there.

Ms ARMITAGE - When we had the evidence previously, some of the farms were very good and made people wash their clothes and do all sorts of things. Some of the other farms had none of those conditions. Do we have something in place? Could there be requirement for the farms to have certain conditions for pickers, because it does affect the whole industry?

Mr KLUMPP - Fruit Growers Tasmania was funded in order to provide a program of development of farm hygiene plans and awareness of growers. While not under regulation, those farm hygiene plans ask for requirements on people entering and leaving those properties.

Ms ARMITAGE - But you cannot enforce it?

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Mr KLUMPP - Not at the moment. That is where I was going in the next step. We have a new biosecurity bill and there are mechanisms within that bill, if the parliament so desires, for us to be able to do that.

CHAIR - Members of these committees will watch that closely, Lloyd.

Mr FINCH - Is that being developed at this stage, Lloyd?

Mr KLUMPP - Yes, we have a draft bill almost ready for presentation.

Mr WILLIE - This could be included in the bill. The member for McIntyre was talking about the list of growers and what has been evident, is there were a number of growers Biosecurity did not know about when this incursion happened. This could apply across any producer. Is there scope to define commercial producers and for them to register for a permit or something like that, so when these things do occur, Biosecurity know exactly who is out there in every industry?

Mr KLUMPP - At the moment there is not. However, there is work going on nationally for our horticultural industries in order to do that. I will use a comparison with our livestock industries.

Ms RATTRAY - Why couldn't Tasmania do that?

Mr WILLIE - If it was a registered system.

Mr KLUMPP - We are. We are working with the TFGA around exactly that, looking at what the system might look like. There are a few elements needed. You need a property register, with a database of properties, with an identification. We call that property identification code. The livestock industry has both of those things. We then need a traceability system - the ability to know how product moves between those elements. They are all governing the livestock industries by a set of business rules. These are all agreed and implemented as an industry program with the livestock industry, called the National Livestock Identification System.

Nationally, we are looking at a similar system for our horticultural industries. At state level we are working with our industry peak bodies about what they might look like and then how our new bill might shape that.

Mr WILLIE - That consideration is part of the development of the bill?

Mr KLUMPP - Yes.

Mr WILLIE - I am pleased to hear that.

Ms RATTRAY - We already have regular inspections being undertaken on properties and yet they are missing out on getting alerts, particularly incursion alerts, and have to hear it on the radio. That seems bizarre.

CHAIR - Lloyd has taken that on notice.

Mr FINCH - In your role as general manager of Biosecurity Tasmania and the budget you might be allocated, it must be very costly with these tests on properties, sending crews out three times a year to some, and then the fruit fly issue that must have blown up out of nothing and all of

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a sudden you have to put resources, human and monetary, into that circumstance. I want to get some understanding of your budget allocation. There is \$22.5 million in your next allocation, and then it jumps to \$26.75 million, then down to \$25 million, and \$25 million again in the forward Estimates.

Part of our scrutiny is going to be are you resourced well enough to carry out the duties you need to carry out in this present day and age? Also, for these emergency situations like blueberry rust and fruit fly, is there a quantum of extra resources and funding you can draw on in those crucial times?

Mr KLUMPP - I might let Deidre talk about the actual budget. For the blueberry rust situation we seek and have been given requests for additional funding through Treasury. We undertake the response and there is no doubt it is challenging. We need to work the priorities, et cetera, and undertake the additional response. We employ a group Biosecurity support officers that are an expandable workforce.

Mr FINCH - Part timers?

Mr KLUMPP - They are sort of casuals.

Ms WILSON - A pool of casuals.

Mr KLUMPP - We have them on our employment list. They are on a deployment list, a register, and we can draw them in as needed. We have utilised that register almost to its maximum through blueberry rust and fruit fly. All that is accounted for and then a request for additional funds on top of this goes to Treasury. We apply for those additional funds and have received those additional funds through Request for Additional Funds.

Ms RATTRAY - We will see them on the next section 19.

Mr FINCH - Did you do that for blueberry rust? Did you have to draw on extra?

Mr KLUMPP - Yes.

Mr FINCH - Can you tell me the quantum?

Ms WILSON - In 2017-18 the RAF was \$145 000 and the year before it was \$109 974. That was the last two years. The year before it was a little less and I am not sure of the timing around that.

Mr FINCH - Was that specifically for blueberry rust.

Ms WILSON - This was the blueberry rust incursion response request for additional funding. I have asked our finance officers for the information.

Mr FINCH - Was the amount for extra funds you received a case built by your office, Lloyd?

Mr KLUMPP - The costs are counted. The actual costs -

Mr FINCH - That you have incurred or that you foretell?

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Mr KLUMPP - The actual costs we incurred are accounted for and then we asked for that.

Mr FINCH - Had it gone more, say \$0.25 million?

Mr KLUMPP - We would be asking for a RAF for \$0.25 million.

Mr FINCH - You would be asking for a RAF of \$0.25 million.

Ms WILSON - What we can say is for some incursions such as this, that is the approach. It is on top of. When it becomes business as usual at a particular point in time, then it comes part of the risk-based approach adopted by Biosecurity Tasmania. That is what happened with blueberry rust in the last two financial years.

Mr FINCH - I am trying to frame this so it does not compromise your situation. Do you feel within the parameters in which you operate with your budget, that request would be viewed favourably by Treasury and by the minister?

Mr KLUMPP - It has been in the past.

Mr FINCH - Not a problem to call on that?

Mr KLUMPP - It has not been a problem in the past, no.

Mr FINCH - You have two big ones at the moment, but it gives confidence if something crops up, you feel you can proceed, throw the resources at it with confidence you are going to be able to build a case and be supported?

Mr KLUMPP - We have these discussions as we are going along. It is about having that confidence and maintaining it as we go along.

Ms WILSON - You can talk on this far greater than I, Lloyd, that some responses would potentially have a national element.

Mr KLUMPP - There is a separation between state and national responses. National responses, which are about exotic pests and diseases to Australia, are cost shared under national deeds. We are signatories to agreements for national cost sharing and it is a structure. That is a different area. If we, here in Tasmania, had a disease exotic to Australia - for a while we thought little cherry virus was one of those - it triggers a national process that becomes a nationally managed response. We would be the combat state and lead the response but that response is cost shared amongst the signatories to the deed. Those signatories are all the government jurisdictions - state and national - and the industry peak bodies affected by that disease.

Mr FINCH - Would you receive any federal funding for the blueberry rust issue?

Mr KLUMPP - Not for blueberry rust, no.

Mr FINCH - Would you be able to hive off some money from the Biosecurity Emergency Response and Research Fund to go to blueberry rust?

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Mr KLUMPP - It has not been settled as to how we do this. Related to that are mechanisms within the draft bill we have for administration of those sorts of funds. We don't have that facility in Tasmania. Some other jurisdictions have similar facilities. The bill allows us to set up those sorts of funds under industry or government programs, which may allow for accumulation of funds for an industry and at the disposal of industry and government for various things, be they biosecurity projects, responses or other activities toward biosecurity. We don't have that facility legally in place, but the new bill we are proposing has those sorts of mechanisms to allow us to bill those funds.

Mr FINCH - Lloyd, through this process, 2014 incursion, 2016, and this one now, do you feel, as general manager and head of Biosecurity Tasmania, limited by any budgetary measure to pull on the resources and funding you need?

Mr KLUMPP - I will qualify it, but the answer is, no. I did not feel constrained in saying this is a high priority, do we have the resources to deal with it? As with Qfly, we had mechanisms to do that. The system allows for escalation and we have a lot of incursions. Many of them are a single-day incursion of something. At the lowest level, an officer goes out and nips that thing in the bud. At the other extreme we have Qfly, a major incursion. So there is a process of escalation in our systems as to levels of incidents. In a level one incident, BT assumes entire responsibility and we devote our resources to it. If a problem becomes large enough that BT does not have the appropriate resources it can escalate to a level two incident. That is when DPIPWE provides resources from across the agency to help BT.

If it goes further, as in Qfly, to a level three incident, the whole State Service supports us and we invoke the interoperability arrangements. In Qfly, we have had people from Education, Justice and DPAC working with us. We have that process of escalation so the resources available for incursions are not only those of Biosecurity Tasmania. We have that flexibility. It is challenging. I don't think you would have a public servant sit across this side of table and say, I wish I had more resources for this, that or the other. We -

CHAIR - There is no minister here, Lloyd, go for it.

Mr KLUMPP - We have systems in place for application of resources to what we believe are the highest risks and priorities. We have systems in place for escalation, if and when we need it, drawing on our sister divisions and sister agencies to help us out. We also have the national arrangements.

Ms RATTRAY - Lloyd, we were aware there was some support for blueberry growers to implement or heighten their on-farm biosecurity measures. Was it \$1000 each?

Mr KLUMPP - That is right.

Ms WILSON - That is my understanding.

Ms RATTRAY - What support has been given to the growers toward fruit fly management, was it at the same level?

Ms WILSON - It was at a different level because of the Fruit Fly Grower Assistance package, the Post Farm Gate Assistance package, and the cold sterilisation package. Due to the nature of the QFF response, the government of the day took into account that control areas were put in place,

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which restricted movement of produce within local markets. As Lloyd has indicated, our new biosecurity bill will look at mechanisms to look at programs for industry support within an agreed framework.

Ms RATTRAY - What was the level of support given to growers affected by fruit fly?

Ms WILSON - The grower assistance package, and I will qualify this by saying I am not managing that program, it is in the AgriGrowth Tasmania portfolio. That does not sit with my secretary.

Ms RATTRAY - I should have asked that two weeks ago.

Mr WILLIE - There is a lot of information available on our website. My understanding is, it is about meeting the cost to business of operating in a controlled area.

Mr KLUMPP - I will talk about the difference, as I understand it. I have not been involved in the grower assistance package. The package to fruit growers as compared to blueberry growers was about improving their on-farm biosecurity systems and providing protection mechanisms. With fruit fly, it was more about compensation for the damage done to them.

Mr WILLIE - As to the different scientific trials that have taken place, you said that spraying to defoliate did not have any scientific basis.

Mr KLUMPP - I said we don't have sufficient evidence to -

Mr WILLIE - Okay. The electrolysed water, is that the same deal?

Mr KLUMPP - I don't know about that one, to be honest.

Mr WILLIE - Do you see scope for further scientific testing? Should there be a funded program to look at those options?

Mr KLUMPP - There is work happening in research and development on blueberry rust, mostly in the blueberry infected states, and internationally. Some of that work is being conducted in New South Wales, particularly on defoliation.

Mr WILLIE - Is there scope to fund some of those programs in Tasmania?

Mr KLUMPP - I am not a researcher, I don't know.

Mr WILLIE - It is not for you to say.

Mr KLUMPP - I would like to see that research.

Ms RATTRAY - That would be TIA's role, wouldn't it?

Mr KLUMPP - Yes.

CHAIR - Are you able to remain on a little longer, Lloyd? We were scheduled to finish at 11.30 a.m. We are arranging for the next witness to be a little later with his commencement. If

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members have further questions? I don't want to have to ask you back again, Lloyd. Do we know where the latest outbreak in May originated?

Mr KLUMPP - As with any detection, we go through a process of tracing back and tracing forward. Tracing back, we see if we can find out where it came from and trace forward. For IP5, we could not find any direct trace backs anywhere. Could not find any trace backs at all. We also undertake surveillance around the infected property to see if there is a local source of infection. We did not find any of those. This property is quite isolated. Given we do not have direct traces either of product or people from one infected place to another, we can only assume it has either got through fomites - fomites are objects or animals, for example, which might carry the material - or through people who did not know they were on infected properties or had not told us they were on infected properties. We do not know and it is unlikely that we will find.

The owner believes it is probably birds. We are not convinced, but it is a possibility.

CHAIR - The other question is around the time again. We have covered this area before but the outbreak was not confirmed but was identified on 5 May. Your staff took commendable action obviously on their part. Confirmation was not received until a month later and it was at that time other growers were notified. Most were notified, if not all. Have I got that right?

Ms RATTRAY - Around 50.

Mr KLUMPP - The results were known at the end of May. I would have to check those dates.

CHAIR - The point I am getting to now is the alert or the notice of this rust outbreak was a month after it was actually detected. Growers would be concerned at the lateness of getting the information when we have something happening to impact their industry. Is there something to change it?

Mr KLUMPP - There are a number of circumstances. Again, individual circumstances impact on the process. First of all, we require confirmation before we go and talk about whether a property is infected or not. It is the diagnostic confirmation, rather than the detection date, which is the important part. There is a big of a lag phase there as well. We are not going to declare a property infected only to come back to find out the yellow spot seen is not blueberry rust. There is a process of confirmation and being sure the diagnostics are correct, before we do anything. The first thing done, even on suspicion, is managing the biosecurity on the property. Working with the property owner to ensure the place is biosecure and that was done. The other thing we have to do is protect the individual. We have a responsibility to individuals, as well as the broader industry. If we are confident the biosecurity measures are in place and they are not a threat to other people, we can wait for the diagnostics, before we provide that information. I would have to go back and check the actual.

Ms WILSON - I am getting the exact date. It was late in May from memory, but I will get the exact date when we have the confirmation.

CHAIR - That they found it?

Mr KLUMPP - We did not know it was blueberry rust at that point. We had a suspicion.

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CHAIR - The protection of the industry is vital. Hence the reasons this came up and on the ABC program referred to there was discussion as to why it was left so late.

Mr KLUMPP - If there is a suspicion, actions are put in place to protect others.

CHAIR - Only on that one property where it is, protections around that?

Mr KLUMPP - On all five of the infected properties. We have this program the fruit growers have been running, about individual properties protecting them more generally.

Ms WILSON - As Lloyd said, the first element was deal with the biosecurity risk and then manage with the grower.

CHAIR - It seem like a concern. As I said the ABC program referred to it also.

Mr FINCH - Lloyd, from this inquiry and representations made to us, we get a sense in some quarters our biosecurity system, the minister, and the department have lost the confidence of some elements of the blueberry industry and concerns being echoed across other industries. In the agricultural sector, we have heard strongly from the TFGA. Whose role is it to regain the confidence of the smaller growers and those involved in organics who are trying to protect their niche as far as Brand Tasmania is concerned? Whose role is it to rebuild confidence from the standpoint we have now?

Mr KLUMPP - It is clearly ours. The best way is for us to do our job properly and is what we are trying to do. We are about to employ an industry collaboration manager. One of their roles will be about the communication of how we do our job. One of the issues is we do a lot of really good work, the only time you here about Biosecurity is when the flag goes up. One of things we need to do is turn that around and demonstrate all the good work we do that nobody knows about, and help us rebuild confidence. The process is underway to employ the collaborations manager, who will be given the job of working with industry. There is another position -

Mr FINCH - They are not weasel words, Lloyd?

Mr KLUMPP - No. I was about to mention another element, actually demonstrating the good things we do. We do a lot of them.

Ms RATTRAY - Has that been advertised yet?

Ms WILSON - No, not as yet, it is part of the package announced in the recent budget but well progressed in terms of development of the statement duties.

Mr KLUMPP - There is another position, which is not about words but actually working with industry to develop plans. We have a biosecurity risk manager; I forget the name of the title, a new position prompted by the fruit fly response. The role is for an individual to work with industry bodies to develop forward planning for responses.

I had a conversation with wine growers starting their own process for their industry. That will be Biosecurity Tasmania's resource to work with industries to help do the forward planning in a collaborative way and work with the industry to be in a better state of preparedness for these things.

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Mr FINCH - Lloyd, in respect of communication we have discussed it here already about the contact you have with growers and those unearthed coming forward. There is also a suggestion when people look for information from Biosecurity Tasmania the website is not user friendly and doesn't throw up the information required as they would hope in what is a crisis situation for their industry. Everybody is nervous. We have heard there is an incursion on this other property and it is heartbreaking for people who have invested time, energy and money. Will there be an attempt made or things put in place to make sure communication is better into the future?

Mr KLUMPP - We have already improved and made some improvements in that way. I take your point about the website. I find our website problematic; that is for the agency to respond to.

Mr FINCH - You will put forward our concerns?

Mr KLUMPP - It is my concern too, and I have put that forward.

Ms WILSON - That is part of my role as well, so, yes.

CHAIR - These concerns could well come up in our report.

Mr FINCH - And reinforce your good judgment.

CHAIR - Are there any further questions?

Ms WILSON - I have the answer to the growers emailed. There were 62 growers emailed.

Ms RATTRAY - Is this the same number as your inspections?

Ms WILSON - Unfortunately, I do not have the answer but we can take on notice. We will check.

CHAIR - We appreciate and thank you very much for the straightforward manner in which you answered questions, as you always do. We are in the process of putting the report together. We have a draft report waiting for this part of the committee proceedings to finish so it will include what we need from here today. We would hope to get the report out within the next month or so. It is an important report. Thank you both very much.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

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Mr PHIL PYKE WAS CALLED AND EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Phil, sorry we have kept you. We felt we had matters we had to close with Lloyd of Biosecurity Tasmania. Thank you for coming back. We realise you are no longer are working as CEO of Fruit Growers Tasmania. When did you conclude your work there, for the record?

Mr PYKE - Just over two months ago.

CHAIR - Phil, there are a few issues we would like further information about. Is there anything you might like to add, since your conclusion with Fruit Growers Tasmania or have come to your attention since you were with us in January?

Mr PYKE - Not really, Mr Dean, because we walked straight out of here and our phones started ringing with calls about the fruit fly on Flinders Island. I literally walked out of here that day, whatever date that was, and it was fruit fly from that time on. Since that day, nothing else has eventuated for Fruit Growers Tasmania regarding blueberry rust.

Mr FINCH - The final question I asked Lloyd was about budgeting and how much they are allocated. He felt it was around \$109 000 allocated to blueberry rust. In the position you were in with FGT, did you have a sense there was enough effort and funding put into this crisis?

Mr PYKE - Kerry, when we go back to those days it was almost like the effort with fruit fly. There were substantial surveying teams on the ground. They were practising high levels of biosecurity when removing plants, with complete coveralls and treating it with a crime scene kind of approach. They put a very strong effort in. The delimiting surveys and having that freedom to enter those markets again, particularly Victoria, were still of a substantial level. I could not fault them. People such as Tania Jensen, et cetera, were outstanding in their response. I don't think industry can be condemning of them either. I couldn't tell you whether that flows through to the higher levels, but those people worked day and night toward those initial responses and the delimiting surveys to allow other people to trade throughout the process.

Mr FINCH - Your role in that process during 2014 and 2016, was it action stations for you? Did you take a strong hand in making sure this was contained as best it could be or dealt with as strongly as it could be?

Mr PYKE - Definitely. Our main liaison point - because there was only me, we have a one-and-a-half person team at Fruit Growers Tasmania - was to keep in touch with Lloyd, with the team and to try to address the trade issues. The trade issues were key. We haven't got it, how do we keep trading when Victoria has closed their borders? It was not about the spread or containment; we need to go to market, how do we do it? Tania Jensen was balancing both the response and those negotiations with Andrew Bishop and Lloyd Klumpp.

Mr FINCH - Your approach in 2014, your mindset, would have been eradication. This message came through from Biosecurity Tasmania and the actions were taken. Eradication, bang, full on, that is the way to go.

Mr PYKE - To be honest, Kerry, we are never going to stop these events from happening. As we become involved -

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Mr FINCH - Blueberry rust, or incursions?

Mr PYKE - To use an example, it is like having a fire brigade in every town. You are never going to stop fires. It is about how you manage them and how you progress after that time. There is still not enough done in education. These breaches occurred, as with myrtle rust, because things were not done properly. We put too much trust in those on that side of the ditch, in Victoria, and that has been evident in the fruit fly issues. There have been issues around the chambers fumigating the fruit and vegetables to come into the state. Look at what that has brought us. If I had to put my finger on where the critical failure has occurred, I would still look at Victoria. The problem is that we have no follow up. We have no way of making someone else pay. The nursery that caused this, when bringing the plants out of Queensland; we have no way of making them pay for what has occurred.

Ms RATTRAY - No accountability.

Mr PYKE - No accountability. This is a COAG issue. If anything came out of this, I would like to see accountability for other states. South Australia is caught in the same boat we are when they move their risk beyond their borders. We are talking about blueberry rust but the fruit fly issue is a shining example of these failures.

Mr FINCH - When these other incursions occurred, the 2016 situation, what was your attitude or change of attitude? What was your sense, from FGTs point of view?

Mr PYKE - On behalf of government we had the mission accomplished announcement, but you can never say 'mission accomplished' for a rust. I know it was about putting confidence back into the markets and making sure we did not have the trade restrictions. When it came back out in 2016 it was a much more difficult phase. We, I and Biosecurity, needed to bring those key stakeholders together and that was part of this. That was the meeting in August 2016 held at Mount Pleasant and hosted by Colin Spry. Howard Nichol [TBC] was the chair of that meeting and IT was about them deciding the way forward. It was not my position. It was about how bringing stakeholders together, representatives from Costa and others were in that room, to work this forward.

Mr FINCH - Did you pull that together, or did Biosecurity Tasmania?

Mr PYKE - I put that together. We suddenly had this broader issue. Before, we had two small properties and then we had this huge property in Devonport, which, to this day and until the day I left, I did not have information as to how much of that was infected. It was not the entire property, but it was still an infected property and we needed to look at how that was going to be managed. That property had evergreen pollination rows, evergreen varieties were there to help pollination, and because of that they were the primary host for rust. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, they were there permanently, whereas the other varieties are deciduous and drop their leaves.

A lot of people worked on it and I still hold to Karen Brock's perspective. She is well-researched, she understands the industry and she knows where things need to go. It was about cutting back those pollination rows, spraying them, over wintering and seeing what evidence comes out at the end of it. That was decided at that meeting. That never changed. No one ever pulled back from that position.

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It was up to Biosecurity to put that into play. It was not until much later, 2017, that hadn't occurred. It had moved to a management position. We know they can manage it because they do in northern New South Wales, but it almost becomes -

CHAIR - They don't manage it so well in New South Wales.

Mr PYKE - No. You have this collision point, Mr Finch, of this smaller, organic, niche sector versus the corporate giants for who it is simply business as usual. To put it on the table, there was probably a lot of that business as usual attitude. I don't know what went on with the interactions between that property, the Costa Group, and Biosecurity. That was a management issue for them.

Ms RATTRAY - You were not in the meeting held after the meeting at Mount Pleasant?

Mr PYKE - No. As we move through these phases, we used to receive weekly situation reports from Biosecurity. All that started to fade. We were all becoming blind about this, about where things were sitting. It was not until I had some conversations with Karen and asked, isn't this going ahead, this containment? Isn't this what is happening? They said, no, they are moving to management. I was never part of that decision process but everyone believes I was.

Mr FINCH - Phil, whose call do you think it might have been to make that decision?

Mr PYKE - I believe it came back to the property owners and Biosecurity. That was not widely spread around.

Mr FINCH - Would DPIPWE or the minister have been connected to that decision?

Mr PYKE - I don't know. I don't know whether it was made at ground level, the operational level or higher up. I couldn't tell you.

CHAIR - When you learned they were going into a management phase as opposed to eradication, which happened to those previous properties with outbreaks, what impact did that have on you?

Mr PYKE - You are always going to try to put out your scrub fires. Your bushfires are going to require different management. They said, we had these two properties and eradicated it, but you are now not doing it with them; one is easier. Take away the emotional impact, particularly with Mr May, which was horrendous. To this day, I really feel for Chris.

Ms RATTRAY - He is still suffering.

Mr PYKE - Tania, he is and he is a remarkable man. It was he who first raised this point about cutting back the evergreens, spraying and overwintering. He had the documentation. Early in the piece our mindsets were shaped that way because it was a way of managing this. Chris May was instrumental in that and he came to that meeting and spoke about it and everyone agreed that is what needed to be done. Where it moved to after that point was difficult. The reality is, depending on how much of that east Devonport property was infected, your chances of eradication would be very minimal. Cutting back those evergreens should have been the path.

I had a conversation with them afterwards, when all this erupted post-May 2007. I asked, were you doing that? They said, no, we were managing it. I said, 'for God's sake, in good faith, just go

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out and do it, try it and show you are at least trying to work with this'. It could have at least contained it a lot better. We don't want chemicals. Look at the apple sector. They have reduced chemical use by 60 per cent in the last decade. We need to keep that going across sectors with IPM.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you for coming back, Phil. We have been informed there were no areas of biosecurity that were not covered off in the IP5 outbreak.

Mr PYKE - Which one was IP5?

Ms RATTRAY - West of Sulphur Creek, a smaller grower with 600 plants. They had done everything humanly possible under their biosecurity regime. We have been somewhat critical of Victoria with the first issue with the plants. Yet, in this, everything was covered and this farm has still had to go down this path.

Mr PYKE - I came in when you talking to Lloyd. You must have asked him about spreading because he was talking about birds, et cetera. I always look at where the prevailing weather comes from on the wonderful north-west coast. I stood there with Chris May in 2014 and he said, 'Phil, come here'. We climbed up on top of one of his water tanks. He said, 'There's Costas right there'. He said, 'The way the wind whipped through here, it's a wonder we haven't got other outbreaks that way'. I always remember that because there were two properties there - Barrington and Ridgley - and the main Costa property here. There is every chance that was caused through this.

Mr FINCH - Distance?

Mr PYKE - Ten kilometres. On a westerly run, prevailing weather, it is very possible. The other farm, IP 5 is somewhere in here. We are talking about something that floats like dust anyway, as you know.

Ms RATTRAY - You can't see it.

Mr PYKE - You can't see it. It is transferring from a multitude of things. We think it came into Australia on a named person's clothing.

Ms ARMITAGE - Do you believe it can travel 10 kilometres?

Mr PYKE - Yes.

Ms ARMITAGE - I read from Mr Pointer - 'thousands of kilometres'. So you think it can travel?

Mr PYKE - If it is notoriously there to be picked up in wind gusts and you have the westerly flow across the north-west, and Chris is up at Ridgley, there is every chance that somehow moved through that phase.

Mr FINCH - Phil, we have heard evidence it is not possible. It is too heavy; the spores are too heavy and don't travel in the wind as efficiently as you are suggesting.

Mr PYKE - What happens then, Kerry, if there were still other spots in between - i.e. spot fire scenario. So it doesn't go from there to there.

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Bearing in mind Bernadette Strick [TBC] talks of a waxed leaf native plant in Tasmania, as potentially being a host. Whether that is there, I don't know, I am just thinking of the movement.

It comes down to personal farm hygiene. On this property you have the transitional worker, the itinerant worker, coming in from other states. There is a lot of looseness around this.

Ms RATTRAY - It is interesting. We are receiving so much varied information; it is always a difficult one.

Phil, given it is two months since you left FGT, did you see from the time we had the first IP1, 2, 3 and 4, an increase across the industry biosecurity? There was a token of \$1000 to help you buy a few pairs of gumboots - that was my assessment, not anyone else's - to help with biosecurity heightened or measures put in place. Did you see a general increase in biosecurity measures on farm?

Mr PYKE - I refer to the former TFGA CEO, Jan Davis, who I get on very well with -

Ms RATTRAY - I think a lot of us do.

Mr PYKE - A wonderful lady. She always said to me, 'On-farm biosecurity in Tasmania is a non-event'.

Ms RATTRAY - Just because they have the sign up at the gate, doesn't mean -

Mr PYKE - We have all been on farms, we are all out there all the time. Who has ever been through a vehicle wash? We drive through an area such as Mud Walls, when you come to town, or any of you from up north, that is a serrated tussock area, which is a horrid plant to spread. There is never anything but farm equipment being washed down, but never anything to say tourists or anyone else being washed down. It is about how seriously we take our biosecurity.

Look at the New Zealand model where you step off an aircraft - I always laugh about the fact that you could probably be bringing in marijuana to New Zealand, but if you bring an apple in, they will take you down. They treat it with aggression. There is a fear in Tasmania about treating it with aggression. I don't mean internally. We are not aggressive about owning the space. We are not saying to the Victorian government, 'You are accountable for this', or 'Pick your game up'. The minister, Ms Courtney, had a go at minister Pulford over the whole issue. South Australia is in the same boat. They are caught between Western Australia and Victoria with those. We want to be known as a lot of things in Tasmania, we want to be known as cool and funky and have inverted crosses on the waterfront and we are going to send those to Launceston next.

Ms RATTRAY - We are not being tough on biosecurity.

Mr PYKE - We do not have big logos on our uniforms. We just downsized them, and we do not want to be seen to be overt. If we are serious about this and includes on-farms, even though they are commercial decisions, Ivan, people have to be serious. I have been on and off farms and never washed my vehicle.

CHAIR - The blueberry growers are of the view there has not been enough aggression, or the blueberry rust situation has not been treated seriously enough. There has been some comparison with outbreaks of other things in this state where there has been a very strong approach to

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eradicating or getting on top of the problem quickly. It seems blueberry rust has not been treated in a similar way. From the Fruit Growers Tasmania point of view, what was your position in relation to that?

Mr PYKE - The key enabler is DPIPWE. In 2014, little cherry virus brought a huge response. There would have been federal money flowing for the response until they found one plant in Victoria and declared it an epidemic, so all stopped. Since that time, little cherry virus has been in rootstock.

Over that period of time between 2014 and 2016 we need to look at the number of responses DPIPWE and Biosecurity Tasmania required. Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome was one and there have been a number of others. It is not as though there is no resource to blueberry rust. How resourced are they overall to respond to this and this and how do you keep them fresh? With fruit fly, it came to the point where they were asking for people from volunteer fire brigades to come and help across Tasmania. That is the extent of which they could potentially go. The enabling response has been in a piecemeal fashion when it should be, apart from police, Ivan, one of the most up-gunned departments we have, because it has an operational response. It is full of good, knowledgeable people, but we have to be seen to be leaders in biosecurity.

Ms RATTRAY - Phil, the response we had when we directed this question to another organisation was, 'Market access was not disrupted so it doesn't need as much energy and effort'. They are my words and not the exact words from that person.

Mr PYKE - Look at where the value of your markets is and with the larger farms it is domestic. They might do a bit of export here and there, but those major farm owners are building farms overseas, in China and other countries. It is the niche area of organic. I spoke to one of them, Trish MacFarlane, earlier this year and the opportunity for export is there. They are never going to be putting on 1000 people, they are never going to be building huge pack houses, but it is a niche area. You are always going to have the cultural problem of big industry versus little industry. I do not have an answer of how do you balance both when whatever decision you make will -

Ms RATTRAY - Impact somebody.

Mr PYKE - Yes. I have racked my brains over this since 2014 of how do we do this.

Ms RATTRAY - And given up and got out.

Mr PYKE - Bigger and brighter things, Tania. The fruit fly will always remain as a standard of what the response really needs to be like, if we are going to be that aggressive over it.

Mr WILLIE - You were talking about on-farm biosecurity lacking in many instances. We were talking to Lloyd earlier and I asked if there been any thought to defining commercial producers and having a register system. After this occurred, all of these blueberry growers came out of the woodwork that Biosecurity did not know about. This could apply across industries. Would you see scope to enforce on-farm biosecurity through a register system; if you are a commercial producer and you register as part of that, you have obligations? It is in everyone's interest, isn't it? There are some farmers who are strict and do it well.

Ms RATTRAY - They are already being inspected.

PUBLIC

Mr WILLIE - If there is a register system Biosecurity has more ability to enforce.

Mr PYKE - Mr Willie, biosecurity is really dictated by where your markets are. It shouldn't be. For example, let us take fruit growers who will go through a process of preparing for export. They undertake their export training. They have a Department of Agriculture audit, which is usually for the Department of Agriculture but sometimes the Chinese government will accept that. You have some of those that do the Japanese market. A Japanese inspector will come down, the Koreans will come down, maybe the Taiwanese will come down. That is what dictates the level of biosecurity and integrated pest management. You do your coddling moth trapping, the whole part of that regime. That is dictated. That is why those farmers have to be market-ready and audit-ready. I believe there would be certain levels of that in the meat and livestock trade for those particular markets.

I am not sure how we would go with cultural change. That is what this is about. How do we encourage the farmers to say this does matter, this is part of my brand, this is part of my value? How do we get this done? Is it a bridge too far? I don't know. In this day and age you cannot force anyone to do anything.

Mr WILLIE - No, but if you had to register, those obligations were made known to you and that during inspections you would be checked against that registration -

Mr PYKE - Yes, it would be about who pays always. Always with farmers, who pays and what is the end result of it. Around market access, the providence, that is where it is important. Apart from that, there is a need for it, yes. If we are going to own that space, everyone should be on board for it. There should be penalties for those who breach it. We have all heard about myrtle rust and how it could have come here. It is very hard to prove. Those fines should be umpteen-thousand dollars. It should be determined through COAG - if you put that fine on a Victorian company they pay it, or a Queensland company. We have none of that. We do not have teeth in our system. I know we have the new legislation going through and there is a compensatory mechanism in that as well, thank heavens. I would like to see that coming out as one of -

CHAIR - Have you had any input?

Mr PYKE - Initially, yes, but because of the election it is all on hold.

Ms RATTRAY - It is up and running.

Mr PYKE - That is where I would like to see it go. There is a fairness for the victims but the perpetrators are made to pay. That money could be going back into that fund. That is really important. If we are going to have these rigid regimes in place, bearing in mind they can work both ways, there is a need to have that put in play. The previous minister was forward leaning on that and how that should work.

Ms ARMITAGE - Adding on from that, you talked about rigid regimes. We mentioned the pickers who come from New South Wales and other areas. It is all very well to have the rigid regime but if those same farms bring in pickers, would you look at something along those lines as well? Some of the farms we have taken evidence from have strong restrictions about when they come on-farm, their clothes are washed, everything is changed and a lot of them will not take pickers from New South Wales. We heard from some who do and had no concern at all. Would you see that something needs to happen there, or what would you suggest?

PUBLIC

Mr PYKE - Ms Armitage raises the issue of itinerant workers, which is a real -

Ms ARMITAGE - It is about them coming from an area we know has rust.

Mr PYKE - There should be those regimes and backpackers are holidaymakers and they are travelling and living loosely. If there is a regime in place and that becomes part of the regime, there has to be a third party to audit that. You only need one -

Ms ARMITAGE - With penalties in place.

Mr PYKE - Yes. You only need one farm, as we see, to make a mistake, or deliberately do the wrong thing.

Ms ARMITAGE - They can ruin everyone else's livelihood.

Mr PYKE - Yes.

Ms RATTRAY - We have hundreds of thousands of dollars of outstanding fines that will never be paid, incurred by overseas people who drive around the state. I often wonder how we would have them comply to our rules and regulations around biosecurity when they are doing a bit of work and having a holiday.

Ms ARMITAGE - The farm, the employers would pay.

Ms RATTRAY - You can ask them if they have washed their clothes. Unless you take them off them, how do you know?

Mr FINCH - People were uncomfortable about the influence of Costa in the decision-making process and what unfolded during the 2016 incursion. Can you give me some of your observations, when you reflect on your involvement with FGT, and how you felt about that perception Costa had a stronger influence than other sections of the blueberry community?

Mr PYKE - No, because at the meetings, Mr Finch, they were represented by one or two people. There wasn't anything in any of those meetings or subsequent meetings like overt pressure. They are a stakeholder. They are a major stakeholder in the volume, employment and investment but they are still a stakeholder. To be blunt, there was more of an issue around finding somebody to blame. They were treated differently to the other two. I can completely understand it but you still had this major farm that, if you put a bulldozer through, Costa would have survived. Their share price would have fallen and it is a shareholder-owned company now, but they would have recovered. It still may not have, and probably would not have, been able to get rid of that rust.

The best option was for them to go through this process of deletion in their pollination rows and at least give that a good shot. It may not have worked but they could have stood there, hand on heart, and said they gave it a good shot, sorry, and what are we going to do now? It would have been moved to management. Where that became this real mismatch, I do not know. I was never privy to meetings between the department and the Costa Group and I'm not sure how that worked.

Mr FINCH - You did not attend any meetings where Costa was involved?

PUBLIC

Mr PYKE - No, I have never been to their property. I did not want to transfer -

Mr FINCH - What about meetings in other areas?

Mr PYKE - No, the only meeting I have any connection with Costa is the Tasmanian Fruit and Vegetable Export Facilitation Group, where they are a stakeholder. That is based on exports and that is under Irrigation Tasmania.

Mr FINCH - Can you understand other members of FGT feeling intimidated by the big mainland operation?

Mr PYKE - It comes back to that collision point between a niche industry versus the corporates. It is not only the Costa Group here now, there are a number of Driscoll's growers across the state. There are others on the north-west and there are other corporate farms. What has been exposed is that complete rub point, they are the big guys, they are here and they are going to wreck the industry. They will be alright and they do not care about the rest of us. To a degree, that is an acceptable position, but where there is a meet in the middle I do not know and to this day I could not tell you where that common ground will ever sit.

Mr FINCH - So where were your allegiances in respect of your members?

Mr PYKE - My allegiances are always with what is the best outcome for industry. The question I always have then, is what is industry? What is industry in this state, when we are talking about two completely separate groups? That is a very difficult tightrope to walk, Kerry.

Mr FINCH - Would you feel the smaller growers, the organic ones particularly, represent the brand of Tasmania? The smaller operators, the niche markets are the quality operators?

Mr PYKE - No, I would not. What I would say is there is a select handful in the group that do. So all the rest-

Mr FINCH - That do it well?

Mr PYKE - That do it well. I can name five of those farms that are absolutely exceptional. Kent Mainwaring - absolutely exceptional. Trish MacFarlane - very exceptional. There are a number of other small ones, but the rest of them come out of the hills for the numbers and need to be engaged, but then what? What would happen after the conclusion of this, will generally be this fading back into the hills, farmer's markets - things like that. We have never heard of them before, so they were never keen enough to be involved in industry decisions and be part of anything above the niche capability. But for those five key ones - they are the ones that really matter.

Mr FINCH - We have a sense there was a lot of pressure around at this time in respect of the different types of operations.

Mr PYKE - Yes, there was.

Mr FINCH - Did you get a sense it was getting a bit heavy?

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Mr PYKE - It was getting out of control, Kerry, because there was no common ground. It was almost like we were stuck in the Tasmanian position, as we often find ourselves, where there are two opposing sides and no common ground. That is the space this went on in.

Mr FINCH - What steps did you take?

Mr PYKE - I gave up. There was no common ground. I could not win. It was a matter of how do you find the common good - the greater good - and to this day I could not identify that.

Mr FINCH - An observation, Phil, on how we might recover from this heaviness and animus - this divide - that has come through this process? How do we head into the future with some confidence for all concerned?

Mr PYKE - I think the key driver here is the department.

Mr FINCH - Are you suggesting DPIPW or Biosecurity Tasmania?

Mr PYKE - Biosecurity Tasmania. Someone mentioned the website.

Ms RATTRAY - We did, it is hard to manoeuvre.

Mr PYKE - The website is so typically bureaucratic. When you look at modern social media and modern strategic communications, you would wipe all of the government websites.

Mr WILLIE - Are you speaking with your new hat on?

Mr FINCH - This is your job now.

Mr PYKE - May I say we are ready to respond in this regard. It is. We worked hard to get the safe farming resources up. They just sit there without a lot of explanation, rarely used. Safety on farms is very important and we drove hard to get that done. The complete issue is the department needs to be more agile in its approach and Biosecurity needs to be open and quick. Putting things through bureaucratic chains and government communication officers, irrespective of which government, stifle process. They stifle agility.

CHAIR - Phil, I will ask you to wrap up fairly quickly because I told you I will get you out of here by half past and I still have a couple of questions.

Mr PYKE - I had an indicator from within Biosecurity Tasmania over the period of 2016-17, they were not to go public with the information; they were not to be out there. I said, 'You are kidding', because going public meant we did not even get to know. Ivan, I will take your last couple of questions before I get a parking ticket.

Ms ARMITAGE - My question refers onto Kerry's and he was talking about Costa. I notice Costa have a lot of evergreen plants. What is your feeling with regard the evergreen plants? Do you think they should be banned in Tasmania? I believe some growers feel that it is the evergreen plants that really keep the spores going. What is your feeling with regard to evergreen plants? Do you think they should be banned in Tasmania as I believe some growers feel that it is the evergreen plants that keep the spores going. What is your feeling with regard to evergreens?

PUBLIC

Mr PYKE - I think when you have a company not knowing what the evergreen plants are have intellectual property in their varieties, I do not think you can dictate that.

Ms ARMITAGE - Even if that plant is responsible for keeping it going?

Mr PYKE - It would have to be proven to be responsible but I think there is a lot more work that needs to be done around that. If they are the hosts up in northern New South Wales, does that mean that they are the host here. That is their own variety. We are then saying to people we do not want your investment, we do not want what you bring here.

Ms ARMITAGE - So that is their own variety, is it?

Mr PYKE - I would say so, yes. That is me speculating of course.

CHAIR - Did Fruit Growers Tasmania have a position in relation to importation of blueberry materials from New South Wales and Queensland?

Mr PYKE - No, we never had a policy.

CHAIR - No position on that.

Mr PYKE - No, because they are purely based around commercial decisions. We do the same with the apple sector, we do the same with the cherry sector. We are always bringing in root stock, et cetera, from other states.

CHAIR - Phil, thank you very much for coming back.

Mr PYKE - Thank you all again. Good to see you all again.

CHAIR - We appreciate that very, very much. Just for your information we are hopeful of getting this report. We have a draft report done but we need to include what has happened here today in that report as well. We would hope to get the report out within about a month if we can. That is what we are aiming for. We wish you all the very best in your new position and no doubt we will hear some of the things that will happen.

Mr PYKE - If anyone needs websites done. Cyber Security. Thank you everyone and always good to catch up.

CHAIR - Thank you.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.