

## Natasha Exel

---

**From:** Michelle Walters <michelle.walters5@bigpond.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 11 October 2017 9:41 AM  
**To:** BRT  
**Subject:** Blueberry rust concern

To whom it may concern,

My name is Michelle Walters and I have approx 1000 blueberry plants just out of Exeter. I'm greatly concerned about blueberry rust outbreak, the decision made by BT to manage it and its impact on me as a small organic grower.

Firstly I'm finding it hard to understand how the disease has made it into Tasmania in the first place. If BT did their job correctly it wouldn't have made it into our clean state. I imported mine from moon blue over a three year period and was surprised every time they arrived to find that only 2 of the 4 or 5 boxes had been opened by BT and checked 😊

Secondly I had to contact BT myself about 12 months ago to let them know I was a grower and that I would like to participate in their survey. (Why if I previously imported: wasn't I already known to BT???? Shouldn't they have contacted me???)

To add to this: it is of my opinion that the disease made it into Tasmania (TWICE now isn't it??) which I see as being negligent on BT's behalf yet as growers we have all been obliging and cooperative in allowing regular checks done on our farms. We are implementing certain measures to prevent spread of disease, educating ourselves etc etc all at our own cost of time and resources because we wanted to be proactive in the prevention of the spread of this disease.

Some poor growers had plants destroyed as well as the humiliation of media coverage and loss of business and income because we all supported the eradication program.

We all knew the consequences if the disease was found on our property but we were willing to take these drastic measures so that other growers would not be effected by it. We have made sacrifices even though this problem didn't occur through our own negligence. I would like to know where is the compensation for growers who's plants have been destroyed?

Now this latest outbreak has shown up on a much larger commercial property and suddenly BT have decided (without a collective agreement from US the growers) to manage rather than eradicate!!!!  
Total kick in the teeth!

I began this little hobby 8 years ago after the birth of my daughter. Being that we had poor acidic soil I thought this would be a great way to utilise what we had at home. I invested my maternity leave money into it. This would be just a drop in the ocean for some people but to me it was all I had at the time and I chose to invest it this way. I did my homework and thought it would be viable for me simply because there wasn't any pest or disease that I would need to manage and the cost to maintain was within my budget. If I had to adopt the management program that BT is wanting to enforce: I'm afraid it would probably be easier to go outside now and pull them all out and stick cows on the paddock.

I wonder how we can possibly have an organic future?? Isn't that what our clean green state is all about??????

Concerned grower

Michelle Walters

Sent from my iPhone