

Government Administration Committee ‘B’ Sub- Committee □ Inquiry into Blueberry Rust in Tasmania

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

The actions taken by Biosecurity Tasmania (BT) upon the initial outbreak of blueberry rust in 2014 were swift and correct. It was an unfortunate and heartbreaking event for the blueberry grower at that time.

The actions taken by BT upon the 2016 outbreak were a complete backflip from it's actions in 2014. The course of actions which followed this outbreak were not swift and seemingly not backed by scientific knowledge. The scientific advice provided by the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture was according to papers from BT, only prepared and approved in the middle of this year. What advice was guiding BT during the 2014 and 2016 outbreaks, and why wasn't BT commissioning research back in 2014 or even earlier when it knew of the threat of blueberry rust from interstate?

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

No information has been provided to growers as to the likely source of infection on all IP's. This information should have been made available.

Where are blueberry plant stocks in Tasmanias nursery trade and hardware chains i.e., Bunnings, originating from, and are these stocks being periodically monitored by BT after initial quarantine screening.

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

We have been involved in the Blueberry industry in Tasmania for three years. The industry just 3-4 years ago had a real sense of buoyancy evident from meeting and talking with many. The feelings I have alongside many other growers I've spoken with is now markedly different, and that sense of buoyancy has been replaced with uncertainty.

Just three years ago we were preparing to up-scale our organic blueberry operations. This plan has now been scuttled due to our own uncertainty in the industry and especially the organic blueberry sector.

The organic blueberry industry in Tasmania will be hardest hit if blueberry rust is to take hold. The options of managing blueberry rust are just not available for organic growers as they are to non organic growers. If rust were to take hold in Tasmania it would effectively wipe out the organic blueberry industry and cause untold damage to Brand Tasmania.

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

I question the veracity of Biosecurity Tasmania's research concerning blueberry rust. It appears from the scant information provided by Biosecurity Tasmania (BT) to Tasmanian growers, that BT have only taken recommendations made by NSW blueberry industry research into whether eradication or containment is appropriate for Tasmania.

What NSW has learnt about dealing with blueberry rust in that state has only minor relevance when making recommendations for the state of Tasmania.

BT have been lazy in its research and have seemingly not looked into research being done in

other parts of the world which could in fact open up a range of options in managing outbreaks.

River Fossil Farm – Organically Grown Blueberries

Petcheys Bay