



## **Blueberry Boost Tea**

**Hand made because it Matters**

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Ms Natasha Exel  
Inquiry Secretary  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Hobart Tas 7000

**To the members of the Legislative Council Government administration committee 'B' sub committee inquiry into Blueberry Rust;**

Hon Rosemary Armitage MLC Member for Launceston  
Hon Ivan Dean MLC Member for Windermere  
Hon Kerry Finch MLC Member for Rosevears  
Hon Tania Rattray MLC Member for McIntyre  
Hon Josh Willie MLC Member for Elwick

**Submission by Blueberry Boost Tea, 15 Dromana Drive Oyster Cove TAS 7150**

### **1: The actions taken by Biosecurity Tasmania to address the 2014 and 2016 outbreaks of Blueberry Rust;**

It would seem no matter the actions of Biosecurity Tasmania in the face of a Blueberry Rust outbreak we find ourselves still facing the problem in 2017 and the future will never be clear for any of us whilst containment is the chosen option.

Eradication is the only answer to the problem accompanied by closed borders to any Blueberry plant material.

### **2. Past and present regulatory requirements relating to the Blueberry Industry in Tasmania;**

As stated above there is no solution no matter what the regulatory requirements until it is regulated that eradication is the **ONLY** solution accompanied by closed borders to any Blueberry plant material.

### **3. The future of Tasmania's Blueberry Industry, including the impacts of previous, current and any future outbreaks of Blueberry Rust;**

There is no future for the Tasmania Blueberry Industry until eradication is legislated as the only solution accompanied by closed borders to any Blueberry plant material.

Blueberries grown in a state that cannot be certified Rust Free will not be able to be exported. The current view of all growers is that export markets will be unavailable to all Tasmanian fruit and the glut in Tasmania will be so pronounced that fruit prices will fall below the cost of picking and packing not to mention transport and marketing.

For Blueberry Boost Tea as a value added product which utilises not only the fruit but also the Blueberry leaf it will mean an end to production. We will not be able to gather Blueberry leaf from any property affected by rust. This of course is yet another loss of revenue for Blueberry growers as we purchase the Blueberry leaf we need for production. Our ingredients must be pristine. We are not able to use leaf or fruit that has been sprayed with any chemical. We need the organic growers to succeed in order to continue.

### **4. The capacity of Biosecurity Tasmania to manage Blueberry Rust outbreaks and other risks into the future;**

Again I state there is no future for Blueberries in Tasmania until eradication is the only solution accompanied by closed borders to any Blueberry plant material.

Biosecurity cannot manage nature. Blueberry Rust is transferred by the wind. Can DPIPWEE possibly guarantee that the wind will not spread the virus between farms? The short answer is no they cannot.

Introducing extreme precautions and on farm biosecurity practices is pointless if the wind is blowing.

### **5. Any other matters incidental thereto;**

At Blueberry Boost Tea we have plans to increase production and would in a short time be looking at approximately a 2 million dollar turnover annually, however for this to happen we need to know there is security for the materials we need to grow as a business. Financial institutions are already asking growers and others with links to Blueberries in this State if they can justify capital and infrastructure investment under the threat of Blueberry Rust.

Our people are also at risk. At present we are a small business and only employ a small number of people. If the decision is not made to eradicate Blueberry Rust and provide a level playing surface to Tasmanian businesses rather than cowering to large Mainland companies we will be forced to close our doors and as a consequence our staff will be required to find employment elsewhere.

I would like you to know who these people are; Georgia a 24 year old Tea Maker, with financial responsibilities such as rent, who will not make ends meet whilst looking for alternative employment.

**Craig a 43 year old man with responsibility for his wife and 3 children who are trying to buy their first home and who again would not have an easy journey if unemployed.**

**Hellen a 53 year old woman who works but also cares for her disabled husband, she has a mortgage and at her age would probably not find new employment.**

**Carl a 58 year old man with a dream to see his family follow him into his business, to sure up their future and to provide the best possible product possible.**

**These are the people we would like you to consider when deliberating on this issue, not to mention all the others who rely on Blueberries in Tasmania.**

**We are local, we employ locals and our investment dollars are spent locally. We are not insular in our view on business we are seeking to expand our export markets. We are though sceptical of a company that exports all profit, import workers and puts our whole industry in jeopardy without any consultation and who are able to determine their own outcomes in relation to biosecurity.**

**Our Tea has been researched by the Menzies Research Institute and found to lower blood sugars, a huge development in the treatment of Diabetes and also to lower Cholesterol a much better option than the current treatment for high Cholesterol.**

**We sell the Tea worldwide and expansion is our aim. None of this will be possible if Blueberry Rust is “managed/contained”. We all know this is not possible - FACT!**

**I would like to sight a precedent for the type of action required.**

**Some years ago all Salmon products were banned from import into Tasmania to save a burgeoning Salmon Farming Industry and keep the clean green image of Tasmanian Salmon. This was easily done as we have the perfect border, it surrounds us.**

**If the Tasmanian Government want to establish a ban on all imports of Blueberry plant materials it could do so very easily. There is more than enough Blueberry stock available in Tasmania to provide all growers and private needs for the foreseeable future. We do not need to import plants and there diseases into Tasmania.**

**The Tasmanian Government should never allow themselves to be dictated to by Mainland interests. The Tasmanian Government should be focusing on Tasmania in respect to its people, its image, its markets domestically and internationally and its industries.**

**Anecdotaly there is a belief that the big Mainland player has determined what response they want to their rust infection and Biosecurity have allowed them to make this decision at the risk of the rest of the industry. So the question raised by that is “is money the only consideration”?**

I have been advised not to make a comparison between Blueberry Rust and Myrtle Rust as it seems those not directly affected by Blueberry Rust are unable to make the distinction between the two. In fact there is it seems a record in Hansard of Ministers making embarrassing gaffes when describing one as the other. This certainly does not create a sense of confidence in any industry member.

However I feel there is another precedent to be found here. Myrtle Rust response from DPI/PWE/Biosecurity Tasmania was total eradication. In fact affected plants and those not seen to be affected but in close proximity were first concrete sprayed and then removed. These plants were generally in private gardens and in some civil landscaping. The only industry affected were nurseries. Are Blueberry Growers or in fact businesses like ours any less important to the State than nurseries?

#### **In conclusion:**

- People will lose jobs and livelihoods all over Tasmania.
- A multimillion dollar Mainland company will flourish with no completion.
- Tasmania's reputation as the "Clean Green Pristine" place will be devastated.
- Family businesses grown from scratch will disappear without a trace.
- Tasmania's export markets will dry up.
- Any and all monies made in Blueberries from Tasmania will leave the State with no gain to the Tasmanian economy.

**The only viable solution is eradication of plants at infected sights and the complete ban on imports of Blueberry plant material.**

On behalf of the Blueberry Boost Team

C Sykes

H Fowler-Brown

C McIntosh

G Fowler