



Photos: (clockwise from bottom left) Ross Boyle, Geraldine O'Flynn, Gail Dunne, Cathy Pensini, Billy Pensini, Diana Rackley, Theresa Baker, Steve Baker, Peter Bale, Ann-Belle Bale, Des Rackley, Richard Clayton and Michael Dunne

## Message reaches target

FEDERAL Trade Minister Mark Vaile chose not to stop for a chat, but he certainly couldn't miss the full impact statement of the *Save the Aussie Banana* team at the Royal Easter Show last month.

Other politicians such as New South Wales Agriculture Minister Ian Macdonald and Deputy Speaker of the New South Wales Parliament John Price did stop and express support for the banana industry's determined campaign that the decision on Philippines

imports will be entirely based on sound quarantine science.

Rain made the job a little harder for the 12 growers who gave away 80,000 bananas over three days, but they were buoyed to find about 80 percent of the people they spoke with were aware of the issue and supportive of the campaign.

We thank the wholesalers and growers who donated bananas. They were Sydney Banana Wholesalers: La Manna Bananas, Aunsana Bananas Sydney,

Moraitis Fresh Australian Bananas, ABC Bananas, PW Chew, Wing Chong, ABD Bananas, Arthur Yee, Sam Yick Bananas and Tropic Bananas. And Melbourne Banana Wholesalers: John Holman and Company, Aunsana Bananas Melbourne, Mick Sgro's Star Fruit Pty Ltd and growers Wadda Plantations (Michael Gallagher), Jackson Farming (Marc Jackson) and Choice Growers (Luke Sidhu).

Special thanks to Richard Clayton of La Manna Bananas.

## Bananas won't be served up on toast

THE Australian industry has called on Federal Agriculture Minister Warren Truss to urgently withdraw the revised draft Import Risk Analysis report.

We are disturbed that essential elements of Biosecurity Australia's Moko disease arguments in the report are based on 30-year-old observations by a lone scientist, Dr Harry Stover.

Surely this makes a mockery of the so-called rigorous scientific analysis in the report? Can't the quarantine watchdog do better than this?

Biosecurity Australia is currently "fixing up" an elementary, but embarrassing, mistake in its report but we are still awaiting the completion of the resultant addendum of revised risks.

In view of the damning evidence (see over) presented to the April 13

Brisbane hearing of the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee's inquiry regarding the gross inadequacies with the science and the process, it is difficult to understand how the revised IRA report can be salvaged by this addendum.

Australia and the international community are watching this banana import report unravel in spectacular fashion. This is damaging to Australia.

It is entirely appropriate for the Australian banana industry to insist that this decision be solely based on science. If BA had stuck to banana



Len Collins ... ABGC imports spokesman

science, which is undeniably against imports, it would have produced a report that could survive any WTO challenge to Australia's quarantine approach.

We continue to work on behalf of the banana industry, and take this opportunity to again thank growers for their ongoing financial commitment to ensuring the science case prevails.

We thank the other groups who are helping our cause including the media, the consuming public, banana wholesalers, transporters, cardboard companies Amcor and Visyboard, politicians and many businesses based in banana communities.

# Witness tables scientific doubts

ASTOUNDING revelations at the Brisbane hearing of the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee inquiry chaired by Senator Bill Heffernan contradicted earlier evidence given by Biosecurity Australia officials that all panel members agreed with the IRA report on banana imports.

At the April 13 hearing, one of the seven-member Risk Analysis Panel, horticulturist David Peasley, told the inquiry he had disagreed with the report to such an extent that he had tendered a minority report (on 1 July 2003) which detailed his concerns.

*(Below is an edited version of Mr Peasley's opening statement):*

1. In relation to Moko disease there is a lack of sound scientific information on the incidence in the Philippines, the epidemiology of asymptomatic infection, the importance of insect transmission, the incubation period and the role of asymptomatic weed hosts in Australia.

2. In relation to the introduction of Moko, the time period set for calculating likelihood and consequences of introduction is only 12 months. This is an unrealistic period.

3. Scientific and other information supplied by the Philippines has not been verified or ground truthed.

4. Conditions in Australia's major growing area, far north Queensland, are ideal for the infection and spread of Moko. They include a large flood plain, high temperatures, heavy soils, high rainfall, frequent and extensive flooding and a high degree of mechanisation. The typography of the area would make it virtually impossible to contain or quarantine a Moko outbreak under these conditions. This point has not been satisfactorily addressed.

5. Symptoms of Moko disease are easily confused with other diseases. If an infection were to occur in far north

Queensland, it is more than likely that by the time symptoms were positively identified, it would be too late to contain or eradicate Moko. This point has not been adequately addressed.

6. Questions exist concerning the rationale by which the individual risk of four pests — Moko, Freckle, Bract Mosaic Virus and Mealy Bugs — which are above or near the appropriate level of protection, the ALOP, are equated with the risk of a single disease.

7. Biosecurity Australia computer modelling, which evolved during the IRA, is extremely complex. I understand the biology and the technical and practical aspects of the assessment, but

the complexity of computer calculations and their application leave me uneasy about their actual relation to and effect on the risk assessment process. I am not reassured by any explanation I have heard to date.

8. Scientific data used for risk assessment and risk mitigation should be peer reviewed and preferably published in an internationally

recognised journal. Some of the information used in the process did not meet this standard — for example, the Stover factor, which is used in calculating the risk attached to Moko.

The issue of trade also consistently permeated risk analysis panel discussions. From the beginning and throughout, the IRA was held up to be purely science based. By the time the second draft was released, it was apparent to me that serious questions existed about the integrity of the science upon which the IRA was based and that, consequently, serious questions needed to be asked about the outcomes of the IRA. To date, I am not satisfied that these questions have been answered.

*The full Hansard transcript is available by hotlink at [www.abgc.org.au](http://www.abgc.org.au)*



Senator Bill Heffernan

Bumper sticker available soon



Contact ABGC on 07 3213 2405

## Action on imports

### Challenges to Australia's conservative quarantine regime

Senator John Cherry speaks at the Rural Press Club lunch in Brisbane on Friday May 21. To secure a ticket, contact Jane Milburn on [jane@milburnmedia.com](mailto:jane@milburnmedia.com) or please call 0408 787 964. Limited seating at \$35/head.

### NQ team supports NQ industry

Join the *Save the Aussie Banana* team of spectators at the May 22 Cowboys vs Panthers game at Dairyfarmers Stadium in Townsville. To be involved, contact Don Pollock (Tully) on 0427 130 714 or Des Rackley (Innisfail) on 0409 476 973.

### New banana column in NQ Register

From May, the Australian Banana Growers' Council will have a weekly column in Australia's oldest rural weekly newspaper, the North Queensland Register. Get the Reggie to keep up with banana news.

### Save the Aussie Banana resources

Thanks to Amcor, we are in the process of developing retailer kits about the banana imports issue to be distributed to fruit retailers and others. The kits will contain *Save the Aussie Banana* t-shirts, business cards, A5 display cards, bumper stickers and mobiles.

### EKKA action in Brisbane in August

The *Save the Aussie Banana* team will be at the EKKA ... new Royal National Association president Dr Vivian Edwards got bananas and the *Save the Aussie Banana* message while visiting the Sydney Show.

### Search for a slogan

Just DON'T do it.

Don't slip up on banana imports.

Give us a hand - say no to banana imports.

If you have an idea for a slogan, please email Tony Heidrich on [theidrich@abgc.org.au](mailto:theidrich@abgc.org.au)

# Don't tamper with banana quarantine