



# Australian Banana Growers' Council

## IMPORTS COMMITTEE

### Newsletter September 2004



## Benny and petition work at EKKA

THERE are always queues at the EKKA, but the *Save the Aussie Banana* team was delighted to see showgoers standing sometimes 12 deep to add their names to a petition against banana imports.

Showgoers were well aware of the pest and disease risks posed by Philippines bananas and seemed angry that the Federal Government is considering imports, particularly after the recent outbreak of citrus canker in central Queensland.

More than 6000 people lodged their objection to imports at three signing points within the Horticulture Pavilion (filling about a ream of A4 paper).

Benny Banana was a big hit in his new NO IMPORTS shirt and it was heartwarming to see the look of delight, and absolute belief, on the faces of the very young as Benny did his meet and greet routine.

Benny met famous colleagues, B1 and B2, who appeared daily at the ABC stand, danced with a 'strawberry' and appeared regularly during banana promotions in the Woolworths Pavilion.

Thanks to the EKKA volunteers – including Kurt, Julie and Greg Lindsay from Caboolture – who kept up with the demand for balloons and recharging Benny's batteries!



## Truss takes steps to change BA

THREE eminent scientists have been appointed to the special panel announced by Agriculture Minister Warren Truss to review future Import Risk Analysis reports (*see over*).

Other changes to Biosecurity Australia announced late in May by Mr Truss include the appointment of Dr David Banks, to replace Biosecurity Australia executive officer Mary Harwood, and the separation of BA from the agricultural market access (trade) area of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

I would like to acknowledge the work of all Senators on the Rural and Regional Affairs Committee in highlighting the systemic problems that led the



*Len Collins ... ABGC imports spokesman*

BA's deficiencies.

Biosecurity Australia has now informally acknowledged the new statistical error identified by Australian

quarantine agency incorrectly concluding that bananas could be safely imported from the Philippines.

I have no doubt that the work of this committee has been crucial in bringing to light

Banana Growers' Council consultants that involve miscalculations which, once corrected, would put Philippines bananas over the Acceptable Level of Risk for Moko and Freckle diseases.

How this error will be dealt with is yet to be specified but it seems inappropriate for stakeholders to be required to comment on a report which is not correct.

Meanwhile, ABGC's Imports Committee values the ongoing support of growers in ensuring we have access to the best scientific and statistical consultants.

We have so far spent \$1.4 million on this campaign and I think the industry can be proud of progress to date.



## Packing champs showcase skills

THE *Save the Aussie Banana* campaign message was strongly in evidence at the third Australian Banana Packing Championships in Innisfail last month.

Championship organiser Des Rackley said the competition was close, with very little between the Tully winners Jacqualin Tilt and Jason Evans from MacKays' Davidson and the Innisfail runners-up Graham Celledoni and Ray Kimbacher from Celledoni Gold.

Third place went to Nicole Vale and Andrew Berry from AgWhite in Tully, and fourth place to Raymond White and Jodie Cheeseman, also of Tully.

"Banana packing is a special skill which involves placing 13.8-14.3 kgs of bananas snugly in the carton as quickly as possible, but at the same time minimising bruising and maximising presentation," Mr Rackley said.

Major sponsor was local agricultural distributor Frank Lowe and Sons.

*TOP LEFT: Des Rackley briefs competitors and BOTTOM LEFT: Charlie Darby, Betty Henkin, Jacqualin Tilt, Jason Evans and Casey Robson.*

## DMG radio backs banana campaign

NINE regional DMG commercial radio stations have been promoting bananas and the *Save the Aussie Banana* campaign during August with daily live crosses in Mt Isa, Mareeba, Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Emerald and Roma.

The radio stations have been giving away fruit provided by ABGC through local retailers as well as stickers, *Save the Aussie Banana* t-shirts and caps.

Thanks to Amcor Fibre Packaging and Visy Board Innovative Packaging Solutions for providing these resources.



4TO personality Tash Riedel (pictured with the Sunshine Fruit Market team), whose family grew bananas at El Arish, is running the Townsville promotion.

## Banana festival float carries import protest

NORTHERN New South Wales banana growers are preparing a fantastic *Save the Aussie Banana* float for the August 28 parade during the annual Tweed Banana Festival.

ABGC has moved boxes of t-shirts, balloons, bumper stickers, corflutes and other campaign material to the Bananas NSW office for use in the parade.

Co-organiser and Murwillumbah banana grower Maree Edwards has invited Member for Richmond Larry Anthony to join the action.

The Consumers against Banana Imports petition will also be active during the festival, although many signatures have already been collected at a number of northern NSW farmers markets.

Other recent activities that have carried the *Save the Aussie Banana* campaign message are: the Science Teachers Conference in Townsville; the Mission Beach Banana Festival and the Redcliffe Jetty to Jetty Fun Run – all held on August 21 or 22 but in different parts of Queensland.

## Three eminent panel scientists named

FEDERAL Agriculture Minister Warren Truss has named three scientists that will be part of the new panel to review stakeholder input into the Import Risk Analysis process.

They are former Australian Quarantine and Exports Advisory Council chair Malcolm Nairn, president of the Australian Academy of Science Jim

Peacock and an Australian Academy of Technological Science and Engineering fellow John Radcliffe.

Mr Truss said their standing in the scientific community will assure stakeholders that the science-based process is being further strengthened through independent review of the final IRA draft reports.

**Don't slip up on banana imports**