



Attn: Stephen Palethorpe, Committee Secretary
Senate Rural Affairs and Transport References Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

27 July 2012

Dear Mr Palethorpe

Re: Inquiry into the effect on Australia pineapple growers of importing fresh pineapple from Malaysia.

NQ Paradise Pines is a Pineapple Packing Shed situated north of Townsville and owned by four Growers of Pineapples. We employ up to 60 workers in the Packing shed and a further 50 workers on the farms during the season.

We wish to submit our concerns regarding the import of fresh pineapples.

The concern of our Growers is the potential introduction of the pathogen *Erwinia chrysanthemi* recently renamed *Dickeya sp.* referred to by Biosecurity Australia as *Erwinia chrysanthemi* (pineapple strain *Dickeya sp.*).

- This bacterium causes Bacterial Fruit Collapse and Heart Rot in pineapples in Malaysia.
- The bacterium **is not present** in Australia.
- Major losses from these diseases are reported. For example, 40% of plants/fruit can be affected in severe outbreaks.
- Bacterial fruit collapse and heart rot is incredibly difficult to manage. If introduced these diseases will cause significant cost burdens to everyone involved in the whole supply chain.
- If introduced into Australia, containment and eradication of these diseases would be needed to protect our industry. This will be very costly to both industry and government. Failure to contain and eradicate the disease is highly likely to result in destruction of this iconic industry.

Although Bio-security Australia rates the risk of the possible spread of the disease as low, we think the risk is indeed high.

The possibility of infected fruit from Malaysia being purchased for example by a processor, who would be after a quantity of cheaper fruit, opens the door for the potential waste of cores and peel being dumped in a pineapple growing area with a very high chance of disease spreading to growing plants.

We have read all documentation and reports issued by The Senate Committee, Growcom and reputable Agronomists in our field, and wish to strongly suggest that the importation of pineapples has a very real threat to the health of our industry and the potential to wipe out the Australian Pineapple. Based on current information all of our Growers are deeply concerned about the threat this pathogen will have on their livelihoods. Further scientific information is clearly required to evaluate the risk of entry of latent infected fruit with any confidence.

We encourage you to investigate this matter very thoroughly before coming to a decision which would be detrimental to our Industry.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely
R & M PACKING PTY LTD

Mario Berra
Chairman/Director