



**COUNCIL  
OF THE  
SHIRE OF CARDWELL**

**TULLY 4854**  
NORTH QUEENSLAND

Your Ref:

Our Ref: 46786.MGK:jlc

TELEPHONE: (07) 4043 9100  
FACSIMILE: (07) 4068 1772  
EMAIL: [cardwellshire@csc.qld.gov.au](mailto:cardwellshire@csc.qld.gov.au)

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Branch Support  
Plant Biosecurity  
Biosecurity Australia  
GPO Box 858  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

**Email: [plantbiosec@daff.gov.au](mailto:plantbiosec@daff.gov.au)**

Dear Sir/Madam

Please find herewith, Cardwell Shire Council's submission in response to the 'draft' Import Risk Analysis report on the importation of bananas from the Philippines.

Should you require further information or clarification on any matter contained within the document, please do not hesitate to contact me on 40 439 125.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Kelleher', written in a cursive style.

**MARK KELLEHER**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

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All Correspondence to be addressed to: Chief Executive Officer, Cardwell Shire Council.  
Postal Address: P.O. Box 401, Tully, Queensland, 4854  
Office Address: Civic Centre, 38-40 Bryant Street, Tully, Queensland, 4854

Enquiries: Jo Cooksley

Telephone: (07) 4043 9125  
Facsimile: (07) 4068 1772

## Cardwell Shire Council – IRA Submission

### **Introduction**

Cardwell Shire Council is part of the Far North Queensland coastal region, situated between Cairns and Townsville. Tully, the Administrative Centre of the Shire, lies approximately 150km south of Cairns. The area of the Shire is 2,901 square kilometres, stretching from the Kirrama Range in the west to the fertile floodplains of the Tully, Murray and Hull Rivers and the coastal beaches. Over 60% of the Shire is either Wet Tropics World Heritage listed or National Parks and forests.

Cardwell Shire enjoys a tropical climate and warm winters, hot dry summers and a wet season from January to March when cyclones may occur. Tully is famous for experiencing the highest average annual rainfall in Australia, over 4,000mm. Our resident population is about 11,000, which includes a number of groups of notable ethnic origin, particularly those with an Italian and Finnish background. We also accommodate many visitors, including Australian and overseas tourists, backpackers and itinerant workers throughout the year.

The main economic strength of the Cardwell Shire is agriculture, with the production of sugar and bananas of major significance. Bananas are the major fruit crop grown in the Shire, with the tropical climate and fertile soils conducive to the growth of the banana plant. Eight million cartons, worth approximately \$125 Million, are produced annually. The tourist industry is growing and should continue to grow steadily, but is likely to lag well behind agriculture for quite some time.

### **Response**

Cardwell Shire Council (CSC) has reviewed the Revised Draft Import Risk Analysis report for the Importation of Cavendish Bananas from the Philippines released by Biosecurity Australia in March 2007 and is extremely concerned at its recommendation to permit the importation of Philippine bananas into Australia subject to the successful application of a number of risk management measures.

The banana industry is an extremely important economic driver for the Cardwell Shire and any exotic pest or disease outbreak that poses a significant threat to the banana industry also poses a major threat to the local economy.

Much of the banana industry in the Cardwell Shire is located on a floodplain and as such is subjected to regular flooding. Any outbreak of a banana disease in Cardwell Shire that can be transmitted by soil or water (such as Moko disease) will quickly spread through the banana production area and put at risk the future of banana production in this area.

Similarly, an outbreak of Black Sigatoka in banana plantations within Cardwell Shire would have equally devastating consequences for the Shire as quarantine restrictions prevented fruit movement and market access. A Black Sigatoka outbreak would also mean a dramatic increase (up to fifty sprays per crop) in the application of fungicides as growers sought to control the spread of the disease, posing an additional environmental cost on the Shire.

## **Cardwell Shire Council – IRA Submission (Cont'd...)**

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One of the social consequences for the Cardwell Shire of an exotic pest or disease outbreak is the flow-on impacts that would be felt by the large indigenous community that currently enjoys near full employment within the banana industry. The banana industry in Cardwell Shire has provided stable employment for several generations of indigenous workers which has been pivotal in maintaining a sense of self worth and social cohesion within these communities.

The Cardwell Shire also benefits from the economic activity generated by the large backpacker contingent that are employed in the industry. These young travellers not only live and work in Cardwell Shire whilst they are working in bananas, but they inevitably enjoy many of the tourist attractions within the Shire during their stay.

Cyclone Larry provided a very clear indication of the financial hardship that would be visited upon the Shire if there were no work on banana plantations for these travellers. If not for the financial assistance provided by State and Federal governments immediately following the cyclone, the Shire would have experienced a very real decline in economic activity as a direct result of not having these workers in the Shire.

### **Summary**

CSC does not believe that the proposed measures will prevent the importation of pests and diseases from the Philippines because:

- We do not believe the measures proposed are efficacious;
- We do not believe they will be appropriately applied; and
- We do not believe verification of compliance with the measures can be assessed.