

28 March 2006



GREATER  
SHEPPARTON

Technical and Administrative Services  
Plant Biosecurity  
Biosecurity Australia  
GPO Box 858  
**CANBERRA ACT 2610**

### **REVISED DRAFT IMPORT RISK ANALYSIS (IRA) REPORT FOR APPLES FROM NEW ZEALAND**

The Council is extremely concerned that Biosecurity Australia is recommending that the importation of New Zealand apples be permitted subject to a number of conditions.

The horticultural industry in the Greater Shepparton region is a major contributor to export earnings for this country and the region is appalled that such an approach with the potential risks of introducing fireblight into Australia could be contemplated.

The concerns of this and neighbouring regions was demonstrated at a public rally held on 28 November 2000 with over 5,000 people attending the rally and the retailers closed the CBD to demonstrate their support. The region will rally again to demonstrate their support that they will not accept this proposal.

The Council has a number of concerns with the proposal:

- Cost and resource shifting from federal and state governments to local government authorities has been a major issue in recent time. Local government authorities have been burdened to undertake increasing responsibilities with less resources. If fireblight were to occur in our region, what would be the Council's role in dealing with an outbreak? In addition, what would be the Council's role in attempting to prevent an outbreak of fireblight?
- How will infections in close proximity to neglected orchards be managed?
- What is the potential for domestic residential fruit trees to become infected and indeed a host and who will be responsible for the management of this should an outbreak occur?
- Our local knowledge suggests that there a significant number of 'feral' trees on the side of roads which therefore raises the ability to find hosts are increased. This raises the issue of who will manage this risk and how will this risk be eradicated.

**Greater Shepparton City Council**  
Locked Bag 1000, Shepparton 3632  
90 Welsford Street, Shepparton 3630  
Ph: (03) 5832 9895 Fax (03) 5831 4161  
Email: [geraldine.christou@shepparton.vic.gov.au](mailto:geraldine.christou@shepparton.vic.gov.au)  
ABN 59 835 329 843

- The Goulburn Valley is proudly known as the Food Bowl of Australia and for its clean green image in food production. The potential for an outbreak of fireblight will impact upon this image and potentially the producers access to domestic and international markets.
- The Council is aware of the government's approach to free trade, however the potential threat to the regional economy in terms of an outbreak as opposed to competition should not be understated.

In 2001 the Agriculture industry was worth \$412 million to the Greater Shepparton economy (source: Greater Shepparton Economic Profile, Urban Enterprise Pty Ltd, February 2006) and the 'farm-gate value' of selected commodities include:

Milk	(\$142 million)
Pears	( \$61 million)
Apples	( \$42 million)
Tomatoes	( \$33 million)

In addition to the primary production value of the commodities there are obvious multiplier economic effects in relation to the primary food industries in terms of production that adds value to primary produce, transport industries, cool storage and employment.

For example, in the year ending March 2001 (source: Freight Movements, Australian Bureau of Statistics, year ending March 2001), over 6 million tones of food and animal products transported form the Goulburn Region. The manufacturing sector of Greater Shepparton consists of 3,809 employees, making it the second highest industry sector by employment in the economy.

All of these components in the value-added chain and indeed the regional economy are placed in risk because of the potential for a fireblight outbreak.

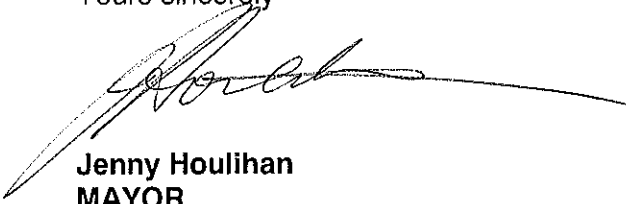
As outlined in the revised draft IRA:

*"The objective of Australia's biosecurity policies is to protect Australia against the risks that may arise from exotic pests entering, establishing and spreading into Australia, thereby threatening Australia's unique flora and fauna, as well as those agricultural industries that are relatively free from serious pests."*

*"Australia's appropriate level of protection is currently described as providing a high level of protection aimed at reducing risk to a very low level, but not to zero."*

The question to be asked is, if the risk can not be reduced to zero and fireblight were to occur in the Goulburn Valley at what price does the Goulburn Valley pay for the failure of Australia's biosecurity policy?

Yours sincerely



**Jenny Houlihan**  
**MAYOR**