

GREATER SHEPPARTON COUNCIL:

**SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE INQUIRY INTO THE IMPORT OF NZ APPLES TO AUSTRALIA.**

The City of Greater Shepparton covers an area of approx. 2,500 square kilometres in the north of Victoria. The population of 60,000 is growing at an annual rate of about 1.5% annually, making it one of the most prosperous and exciting communities in regional Victoria, if not Australia.

Greater Shepparton is proud of its reputation as being at the heart of the Food Bowl of Australia. An \$8 billion regional economy is based on irrigation, and the dairy and deciduous fruit industries have to date been the major contributors to our regional prosperity.

For the past 17 consecutive quarters, building approvals in Greater Shepparton have exceeded \$2 million per week – an indication of the confidence and potential of our increasingly diverse and innovative economy.

It has been claimed that more than 85% of the nation's pears are grown in Greater Shepparton, that canning pears are critical to the profitable operations of SPC Ardmona, that SPC Ardmona underpins an industrial and manufacturing sector in Greater Shepparton that contributes heavily to our \$8b. economy.

It has been reported that Biosecurity Australia itself acknowledges that at least 3% of the apples that will enter Australia from New Zealand will carry the fire blight bacterium. Should these bacteria settle and multiply in any orchard, the recommended means of control is an application of anti-biotics by spraying – a means of control prohibited in Australia.

There are people far better qualified than the Greater Shepparton councillors to comment on the science offered by Biosecurity Australia to support the importation of NZ apples. But very few people are better qualified to predict the catastrophe that would eventuate if fireblight took hold in our pear and apple blocks. Given that at least 3% of imported apples will carry the bacterium, it is inevitable that at some stage fireblight will take hold in the Goulburn Valley. While some may argue that the risk is small, we argue strongly that any risk at all is too great to be even considered.

We would like to be heard at a public hearing to support the view that NZ apples should not be allowed to be imported into Australia.

Yours sincerely

Anne McCamish  
Mayor - Greater Shepparton City Council