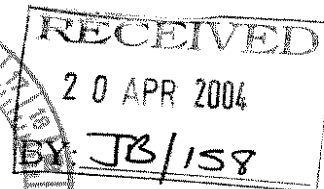
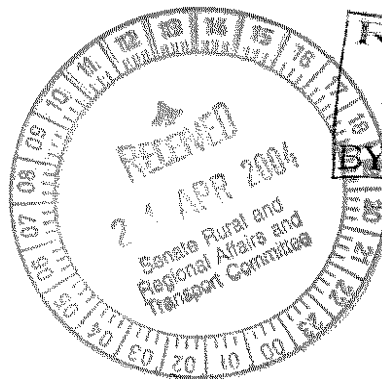


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P O Box 754
INNISFAIL QLD 4860
16th April 2004

The Hon Warren Truss MP
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA A.C.T. 2600



RE: IMPORTATION OF BANANAS FROM THE PHILIPINES

It seems very strange that Biosecurity has done an about turn from its previous decision in 2002 and has now approved the importation of bananas - not long after the free trade agreement with America.

It makes one wonder, because I believe a large proportion of plantations in the Philipines are owned by Americans and Philipine Government Officials also have an interest.

If this Government intends to allow the importation of bananas into Australia, the Banana Industry will be wiped out over the next few years. Also if Moko disease is introduced it will not only affect the bananas, but the native eucalypt trees which will affect our native fauna. Our Department of Primary Industries have very strict control on diseases and if any plantations are found with disease they and the surrounding plantations are quarantined until they are disease-free, as happened not so long ago in the Tully area. Can Biosecurity and our Government guarantee one hundred percent that no diseases will enter Australia? The hardship from the importation will not only affect growers but the whole community and many industries:

1. The Transport Industry supplying bananas to the markets will not have any loading to go South, so freight costs North will be greatly increased.
2. The Packing Industry supplying cartons to growers will not be viable.
3. The Fertilizer Industry will have greatly reduced demand for their products.
4. The machine shops making implements will have to close down.
5. Backpackers will no longer be able to work in the Innisfail and Tully region. This will result in a huge loss to tourism as they spend their money locally on lodging, food and entertainment.
The Federal Government will miss out on taxes paid by the backpackers.
6. Buses carrying Backpackers to and from various areas in Australia will lose out on a lot of trade.
7. Our unemployment will skyrocket with more people on the dole and more people committing suicide because of the extra hardships and complete change of lifestyle. There are times when there is an oversupply of bananas on the market now and growers struggle at this time. How can they survive with imports?

If this Government does a backflip and allows the importation of bananas they either must subsidise local growers per carton or place larger import tax on banana imports. Don't you realize that we cannot compete because they use cheap labour? Could you please tell me how much wages are for one week on these plantations? Furthermore, if this Government allows such a stupid move as the importation of bananas from the Philipines, I feel that this will be their downfall at the next election and Peter Costellos' ambition of ever being Prime Minister may never occur. If Labour win the next

election it may take another 13 years, at least, of them increasing payments to all the welfare groups and minority groups before we can get them out again. Can Australia afford that?

Wake up before it is too late. A lot of people fought to save Australia, not to give it away. A reply to this letter would be appreciated.

Your struggling Australian Banana Grower



W.B. McDOWALL

cc: Senator The Hon Bill Heffernan MP
The Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA A.C.T. 2600

cc: The Hon Mark Vaile MP
Minister for Trade
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA A.C.T. 2600

cc: Senator The Hon Judith Troeth MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry,
The Senate
CANBERRA A.C.T. 2600