



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY
12th Assembly

Petition

Registration No.	47
Title	Stop eradication Program and save our banana plants
Presented on	Tuesday 16 June 2015
Presented by	Ms Kezia Purick MLA
Referred to	Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries (Hon. Willem Westra van Holthe MLA)
Date referred	16 June 2015
Response due	1 December 2015
Response received	10 August 2015
Response to be presented	25 August 2015

Petition

Stop **Banana Freckle Eradication in the NT**

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory:

- The petition of banana growers in the Red Zones of the NT brings to the attention of the House that the Banana Freckle Eradication Program in the NT is causing significant hardship and trauma in that we have been assured that our banana plants are free of Banana Freckle and we declare we will not take our banana materials out of the Northern Territory and we are concerned for the loss of biodiversity if our heritage-style banana plants are destroyed and Banana Freckle has been classified in other parts of the world as a low-risk pest if regulated adequately and
- We, the undersigned, humbly petition you to stop the eradication program and save our banana plants.

Response

Stop Eradication and Save our Banana Plants

The National Banana Freckle Eradication Program (the Program) is working to eradicate the new strain of Banana freckle from the Top End and Australia. This nationally important Program has been approved and funded by all Australian States and Territories and the Banana and nursery industries of Australia. The Program worth more than \$20 million is the largest response to a plant pest in Australia. The Northern Territory (NT) is at the forefront of a nationally important program that confirms its strong commitment to biosecurity. The NT and Australia have a strong history for eradicating pests and diseases and protecting our primary industries and the environment.

The eradication of the new strain of Banana freckle from the NT and Australia ensures the Banana growers of Australia continue to be highly productive and produce wholesome Bananas. Overseas experience has shown the impacts of Banana freckle to be significant. The eradication will support the continued growth of the Banana industry in the NT.

The first of 3 Phases of the Program has come to an end. The main activities of the first Phase were restrictions on movements for Banana plants and fruit in 6 declared quarantine zones across the Top End and destruction of all Banana plants in each of the 6 zones. Any Banana plant in any one of the 6 zones is a potential host for Banana freckle and their removal is the only way to ensure Australia is Banana freckle free.

The community has shown good support for the Program. With the great understanding and support from householders, surveillance of more than 41 500 addresses has identified almost 9 500 addresses with Banana plants. Householders have shown great patience as field staff returned many times to validate information.

Banana plants have been destroyed from the 9 500 addresses with householders and commercial growers completing destruction of their own plants at more than 2 300 of the 9 500 addresses. That is more than 25% of addresses where householders destroyed their own plants. What a great effort!

I thank the community for their great support for the Program. Further, I acknowledge that the destruction of Banana plants for some in the community has been a difficult decision. I thank those who have made those difficult decisions.

Bananas continue to be readily available across the Top End.

People of the Top End in the declared quarantine zones will be able to replant Bananas from 1 May 2016. After the 12 month sentinel period from May 2016 to May 2017, the planting of Banana plants across the Top End will return to normal. Householders and growers will be able to source Banana plants from their usual suppliers. Those suppliers will be able to provide the varieties wanted by consumers and including those heritage varieties kept by some growers.