

## **Notes from the Board**

Two major acknowledgements were given at the latest Panama TR4 Program Management Board (Board) meeting. Jim Pekin, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the ABGC since 2011, has officially retired from his position and was acknowledged by the Board for his contribution towards managing Panama TR4. The Chair personally thanked Jim for consistently providing sound advice since the initial response period to Panama TR4. Jim's service to the ABGC and Panama TR4 Program Management Board was also appreciated. This is Jim's last meeting and incoming CEO Leanne Erakovic was congratulated on her appointment and welcomed to the Board as a Representative Member.

Stephen Lowe's resignation from the Board was announced and he was thanked for his excellent work with the Panama TR4 Program. Stephen's contribution and commitment to the Board was duly noted.

Recognition was also given to the transition team for the momentum being noticed with the Code of Practice, the Industry Management Plan and supporting strategies (surveillance, compliance).

The Board also discussed the industry issue of disposing of plastic waste that comes from banana farms. Several action items will progress to seek environmentally friendly methods for disposing of bunch bags, strings and other plastic used on farm. The Board recognised the special issues of disposal of plastic waste from Panama TR4-infested farms.

### **Transition to industry update**

Since the last Board meeting in June, there has been much progress and traction on how industry plans to manage the disease from 1 July 2023. The below documents for disease management have been progressing well:

- Code of Practice for the management and control of Panama disease tropical race 4 in Queensland
- Management Plan post 2023
- Surveillance Plan, and
- Compliance Plan.

The Board first convened in April 2020 to formalise the joint industry and government partnership that has successfully managed Panama TR4 in Far North Queensland since 2015. The next Board meeting in November 2022 will mark only seven months until disease management is handed over from government to industry in July 2023. This will be a historic moment for both the Queensland Government and the Australian banana industry, and will ensure Queensland's banana production will continue in the presence of Panama TR4.

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**General enquiries about this notice:** Call Rhiannon Evans, Program Leader on 07 4091 8141 or Sonia Campbell, ABGC on 0428 038 330

**Grower enquiries to the Board:** Call Jim Pekin on (07) 3278 4786

**Next  
meeting  
Nov  
2022**

*The Panama TR4 Program is a joint initiative between the Queensland Government and the Australian Banana Growers' Council.*

**Panama  
disease  
tropical  
race 4**

