

## Notes from the Board

Over the last four years, there has been a huge effort shown by both the Australian Banana Growers' Council (ABGC) and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) to collaborate on industry leadership of Panama disease tropical race 4. The process has been historic in many ways, and practices are now being implemented that will culminate in a successful and smooth transfer of responsibilities.

Beyond 1 July 2023, Biosecurity Queensland (BQ) will lead on enforcement of legislation around the disease. A permanent Senior Biosecurity Officer has been appointed to undertake these duties and will be based in the Innisfail district.

### Board representation

Tully Valley banana grower, Adrian Crema, was officially welcomed to the Board.

In April, two Board members will be retiring:

- Malcolm Letts, Chair of the Board and Deputy Director General and Chief Biosecurity Officer, DAF
- Mike Ashton, General Manager and Chief Plant Health Manager, Plant Biosecurity and Product Integrity, DAF.

Malcolm and Mike's last Board meeting will be in March.

Dr Rachel Chay is the newly appointed Deputy Director General and Chief Biosecurity Officer for DAF, and will officially commence as Chair of the Board from April.

ABGC has commenced recruitment of a Program Manager who will provide oversight of disease management from 1 July 2023. The position will also be heavily involved in recruiting the new ABGC surveillance and compliance team leading up to 30 June 2023.

ABGC intend to deliver surveillance for the Panama TR4 well before 30 June 2023. ABGC plan to continue with the current established surveillance schedule beyond 1 July 2023, which will provide confidence in knowledge of disease whereabouts across Far North Queensland.

The Board first convened in April 2020 to formalise the joint industry and government partnership that has successfully governed the Panama TR4 biosecurity response in Far North Queensland since 2015. The next Board meeting in March 2023 will mark the start of the last quarter of government leadership of the biosecurity response. The motivation and enthusiasm shared between the parties to achieve a highly effective disease management program for industry continues to grow as the end of transition becomes nearer.

**Next  
meeting  
7 March  
2023**

**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 Leanne Erakovic on (07) 3278 4786

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

**Panama  
disease  
tropical  
race 4**

