

MEDIA RELEASE

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Pederick backs industry call for action on fireblight

Shadow Agriculture Minister Adrian Pederick has echoed calls for improved detection methods to guard Australia's apple and pear industry against imported diseases.

A recent decision to allow the import of apples into Australia has local growers anxious that the destructive disease fireblight might spread to Australia through imports from New Zealand.

Apple and pear growers fear the highly contagious bacterial disease could seriously harm the Australian industry and threaten our clean, disease-free image.

'I support Apple and Pear Australia's call for funding for development of seek and destroy methods to control what some believe will be the inevitable outbreak,' Mr Pederick said.

'This disease is so contagious and spreads so easily that only the very best preparation, planning and education can give any sort of protection against it.

'The focus has been on emergency measures to take after an outbreak. In countries where fireblight already exists a great deal of money is spent controlling the spread and great damage is done to the economies of affected regions.

'Prevention is better - and cheaper - than cure, but prevention depends on early detection.

'In the interests of an industry with a farm-gate value of \$30 million in SA alone, the state government should be putting pressure on their federal counterparts to provide adequate funding for the required research and development.

'Given that New Zealand apple imports will commence in 2012, there is not much time left to get it underway.'