



**Frances
Bedford**
*Independent State
MP for Florey*

MEDIA RELEASE

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Bedford Bill to Fight Unfair Fruit Fly Fines

Independent member for Florey, Frances Bedford MP, today moved to introduce legislation to stop government revenue raising from its ‘zero tolerance’ approach to fruit fly fines.

“Protecting our fruit fly free status is of course vitally important, but it doesn’t need to come with costly fines on people trying to do the right thing, pensioners, self-funded retirees and others on low or fixed incomes.”

“Like many in the community, I have been shocked by this heavy-handed enforcement approach which is resulting in grossly unfair outcomes. Travellers should be encouraged to declare their fruit at the Yamba quarantine station—not penalised with a whopping \$375 fine in the mail a few days later” Ms Bedford said.

Ms Bedford said the public totally supports zero tolerance, but there is mounting evidence of South Australian travellers being stung with unfair fines, suggesting the policy is fundamentally flawed.

“Fining people who are doing the right thing seems counter-productive and sends the wrong message. What does it really do to protect Riverland growers from fruit fly risk?”

Statistics supplied by the Minister show since introduction of zero tolerance, the amount of fruit collected at Yamba has more than halved, which could just as easily suggest people are simply not declaring fruit.

“Surely, it is better to encourage those arriving at the quarantine station to declare fruit—just like we do for travellers arriving by plane at Adelaide Airport and just as we used to before.”

Ms Bedford said she had been approached by several residents in her north-east seat of Florey who had declared fruit in good faith at the quarantine station only to be fined - for being honest. Like other MPs, she said she had asked to have their fines reconsidered, to no avail in her particular cases, while other MPs had been successful – a perplexing inconsistency.

“If the Minister or the department had been prepared to be reasonable, there would be no need for this private member’s bill,” she said.

Ms Bedford’s *Plant Health (Pest Affected Plants) Amendment Bill* will introduce a defence for persons who declare, destroy or dispose of fruit at a quarantine station or surrender fruit to an inspector by the quickest possible means. Nothing in the bill will affect the government’s ability to set up random roadblocks or maintain increased presence at the upgraded Yamba quarantine station.

“Given the extra \$5 million in revenue raising which the Treasurer has already banked, the public has a right to know if tough fines are just a way of paying for other things apart from zero tolerance.”¹

For further information contact Frances on 8263 2666

¹ Mid-Year Budget Review 2019.