

14 Nov 2007: WASP West Aucklanders Against Aerial Spraying Media release

GOVERNMENT'S MISINFORMATION ON PAINTED APPLE MOTH SPRAYING DEPLORED

West Aucklanders Against Aerial Spraying (WASP) welcomes the People's Inquiry Report into the Painted Apple Moth spraying but deplores the current Minister for Biosecurity's misinformed response.

We take issue with a number of Mr Anderton's statements, Helen Wiseman-Dare, WASP Chairperson said today, particularly concerning any threat to the Waitakeres. MAF's own "Potential Economic Impact on New Zealand of the Painted Apple Moth" July 2000 report states that "No introduced insects have yet caused serious problems to indigenous forests". This was borne out by the fact that although PAM infestations were widely dispersed throughout west Auckland, no moth colonies ever established themselves in the Waitakere Ranges. This moth is a native of Australia where it is known as the "wattle moth". As was discovered here, its favourite food is wattle trees with the majority of moth finds being on wattles. Very large numbers of wattle trees were destroyed throughout west Auckland in an attempt to control the spread of the moth, with ratepayers being left to fund most of the necessary revegetation afterwards.

Mr Anderton's statements on effects on horticulture are not borne out by MAF's report either, which states that "additional costs to commercial horticulture of the painted apple moth are assumed likely to be relatively small."

It would appear from the report that a driving concern was the possibility of trade barriers being erected by PAM-free overseas trading partners.

Mr Anderton's statements about the toxicity of the moth are also misleading. The caterpillar has hairs which may cause irritation if a person comes in contact with them. This has not been known to cause any lasting effects, in most cases speedily remedied by the application of antihistamine cream, unlike the effects of Foray 48B spray which have left many with lasting health damage.

The misperception that only those with pre-existing health conditions would be affected by the spray was not borne out either, with many with no previous health conditions becoming ill, particularly children. Serious health effects were also seen in birds and animals directly after exposure to the spray. No proper Epidemiological study was ever carried out.

WASP also takes issue with Mr Anderton's statement that the government was "deeply concerned" for the people of west Auckland and "ensured they could be looked after." The People's Inquiry exposed the reality of people's

experiences with the government - many have been left severely traumatised. Not one was ever compensated by the government for their full health and relocation costs.

\$90 million of taxpayers' money was spent on this campaign with the majority going on a media war including full page propaganda ads in major newspapers. There is also no proof that aerial spraying was responsible for the eradication of the moth. After nearly 3 years of spraying new hotspots were still being found. It was not until MAF began weekly releases of thousands of sterile male moths that eradication was finally achieved.

Ends

Helen Wiseman-Dare

Chairperson

West Aucklanders Against Aerial Spraying (WASP)