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NEWS RELEASE

Vote for Murray Valley Citrus Board

A growers' poll to approve another four-year term for the Murray Valley Citrus Board will be held from the May 28 to June 8.

More than 400 citrus growers on both the NSW and Victorian sides of the Murray River are required to vote. Voting registers will be available for inspection for two weeks from Friday May 11 at DPI offices in Irymple and Swan Hill, NSW DPI at Dareton and Murray Valley Citrus Board in Pine Avenue, Mildura.

The Murray Valley Citrus Board is a statutory authority and every four years growers are given the opportunity to vote on re-making statutory provisions for another term. The current term expires at the end of June.

The board was established more than 20 years ago following a campaign by local growers, who saw the need to raise funds to pay for services and projects that mattered most to growers in the Victorian and NSW Murray Valley.

Levies of \$5.50/tonne pay for the services of several staff, including an Industry Development Officer and Field Officer, who deliver annual grower-approved projects in the areas of:

- Fruit fly awareness and eradication programs
- Market access & biosecurity protocols
- On-farm trials and workshops
- Issues advocacy and representation
- Product promotions
- Seasonal market reports
- Orchard pests & diseases
- Crop forecasting and fruit maturity testing
- Maintenance of growers and plantings database (essential to maintenance of biosecurity protocols)

Citrus Board chair and grower Jan Denham says the vote is crucial to the future of the citrus industry here.

“For the first time, growers must consider the possible loss of benefits if the campaign by Citrus Australia for abolition of the board succeeds. It comes down to a choice of regional programs – identified, approved annually and funded by local growers, or Citrus Australia’s plan to seek a doubling of the national citrus levy to pay for a new national five-year R&D program, which does not include provisions for region-specific issues.

“The board is asking growers to take the time to investigate the issues and consider the consequences of losing statutory provisions that provide for local ownership and management of crucial programs, particularly fruit fly awareness, eradication and market access programs.

Paying the one national levy, albeit double the current levy, might sound appealing, but national levies must be spent on programs of national significance. Therefore, if Citrus Australia succeeds in its campaign the region-specific programs and services delivered by the Murray Valley Citrus Board would be shelved.”

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