Media Release

Willem Westra van Holthe, Member for Katherine
Deputy Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries

Territorians the front line of defence

17 March 2015

The Northern Territory is on track to eradicate Banana Freckle, with more than 37,000 households joining the fight against the serious plant disease.

Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries Willem Westra van Holthe thanked Territorians for being at the forefront of Australia’s largest plant biosecurity response.

“We have less than 2,500 properties where plant destruction is outstanding and of those, over 500 of the households are booked in for destruction,” Minister Westra van Holthe said.

“87% of all premises in the Red Zones have complied with the eradication program.

“Territorians know this eradication work is vital so we can grow healthy bananas in the future - that means healthy fruit for backyard growers and the NT banana industry more widely.

“Banana Freckle cannot survive without banana plants; that’s why even healthy banana plants have to be removed from red zones. We know eradication is the only option to rid the Territory of this pest.

“I’d like to congratulate the Tiwi Islands for being the first of six red zones across the Territory to destroy all banana plants,” Minister Westra van Holthe said.

Banana plant destruction in the regional red zone of Raminginging has also been completed, with Batchelor, Rum Jungle and Daly River/Nauiyu also almost completed.

The Banana Freckle Eradication Team recently seized several potted banana plants that had been secreted in bushland near Darwin.

A tip off from the public led to the find, which could see a maximum fine of $74,500.

“I can’t express my disappointment strongly enough that someone would put the biosecurity of the Northern Territory at risk for a few bananas,” Minister Westra van Holthe said.
“This is an extremely short sighted thing to do and something I am confident is not widespread within the community.

“The Banana Freckle Eradication Program is the largest plant pest eradication program ever undertaken in Australia. We will only be successful if everyone does their bit.

“I would like to thank the field teams that have been working around the clock to ensure we meet the deadline to have all banana plants in the red zone removed by the April 30 2015,” he said.

Minister Westra van Holthe today joined the eradication team at the Darwin Botanic Gardens where 100 plants had been removed.

Call 1800 771 163 for more information or to book an appointment with the Banana Freckle Eradication Team.

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