

**PUBLIC SUBMISSION**

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Mr Noel Hall  
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Dear Tom,

I write to you in direct reference to the review of the "Code of Conduct", and to express my views on same aspects of the "Code" that I believe to be address by your committee.

Firstly, we are a small family farm that has been operating for the past 30 years, and hope to, as a family farm, into the future. As a supporter of the code for the past years, I truly believe that the code would address some of the issues regarding transparency in the market place, and it does to some extent. But for the code to work there are a few issues, with suggestions to make the code much more efficient and transparent, without placing a greater burden on the wholesale sector.

Firstly, for a merchant to give a price for any product before dispatching, can be difficult as such, but, and I assert but, without knowing what the market conditions are at any one week or trading day. It has to be said that for any grower to participate in the central markets, reliable, accurate, and relative information must be available to the grower for him or her to make a decision whether it is worthwhile sending a product, if the returns are not sufficient to cover costs associated with growing, preparing, and dispatching of their produce. For example, if I as a grower does not receive \$17.50 for a carton (5kg) of lychee's in the Sydney markets I would be foolish to supply because I would just loose my inputs as well as the picking and packing and freight cost. So for me as a supplier to make that crucial decision to supply, it is paramount to have accurate market information available.

I also believe that the central markets of all major states have an obligation to supply such information, and I also believe that our lobby groups, such as “Grow Com”, “HAC”, and other groups have an obligation to help facilitate such information. To offset costs involved, the grower, buyer, and other groups who wish to access this information have an obligation to pay for this service.

It will be said by some sections of the industry that this service is available right now and that is a fact. But to put this argument in context, I get my market information from our district paper, printed each week day except on Monday’s (Townsville Bulletin), which gives some information from the Rocklea markets in Brisbane. But this is where it falls down. If I quote these prices to a merchant the response is, and I quote, “Don’t take any notice of that report, it’s rubbish”. So how can I be sure that it is accurate.

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So, I will now put forward a possible solution for evaluation or discussion to try and solve this problem. As we should all be aware, most fruits or vegetables can be grouped into segments such as, stone fruits including cherries and berries be in group one. Other groups could be tropical fruits, leafy vegetables including brassica’s, heavy produce, and so on. These groups could be placed on a 1900 number which will cost the grower or buyer a payable phone call and to pull a figure out of the air at \$2 per minute. So there will be a cost recovery for the supplier of the information. An argument by the central markets will be, we already have this information and that the central markets gives accurate information, but as I have checked with “market information services” in Brisbane, they also will admit, as they have to me, it is only the word of the sales team on the floor, and they have also heard the quote “Don’t believe that rubbish”.

So, here are my thoughts on how to collect such information. All markets have a manifest of produce movements, and I also believe most merchants who run an efficient section know what produce is available on a daily basis and some indication of what produce is going to be available in the coming week.

The industry needs to have a completely independent individual to collect actual sales figures for produce from unknown prominent merchants, and these could be a mixture of participants. The price paid for items are totally confidential, not one individual except for the collector would or could know which merchant it came from or whom it was purchased by. Commercial confidence would be protected under law, growers and buyers could have confidence in the information, cost recovery is in place as if each grower or buyer used this service once a week it could, or should I say would, be quite lucrative. 20,000 grower and buyer participation on a regular basis could not be disputed, ask any grower, as I have.

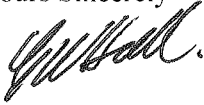
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I do know that this proposal needs much more discussion or debate, but if the ACCC, HAC, Grow Com, NFF, QFF, are serious at solving the transparency issue and if the central markets Australia wide are after more business from more growers who sell direct and if we say you have absolutely nothing to hide then this issue needs to be taken seriously so that we can all profit, to make our industry one of the cleanest, greenest, most honest market in the world.

In addition to the question of price difference from farm gate to retail I believe that a simple average system needs to be implemented to address this ongoing debate. It is well known that a throughput manifest operates in all central markets. If not it should be. In previous years the Brisbane market authority would publish annual throughput in tonnages and an average dollar amount :- 05/06 \$860 mil passed through with a tonnage amount of 625,000 tons (\$1.376 per kg) on average. If this

was done quarterly and a corresponding extensive survey of the retail commodities, an estimated % difference could be achieved especially on the most basic food types, eg. Bananas, potatoes, pumpkin, onion, and so on. If as it is always reported, super markets have a small mark up or margin which is always in dispute, this idea may dispel or enhance the debate. But also may give transparency all along the food chain. No one disputes the fact that profit is essential in each transactions, but to be fair to the consumer, the knowledge of a fair profit also needs to be addressed.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Noel Hall', written in a cursive style.

Noel Hall

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