



5 November, 2001

CITRUS INDUSTRY INQUIRY
PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION.

Dear Sir,

We at XERRI BROOKS are pleased to have an opportunity to lodge a submission with the Productivity Commission recently appointed to inquire into the Australian Citrus Industry.

As a firm of Accountants, Advisors and Auditors, our role in the Cobram/Barooga/Tocumwal community is to provide small business consultancy to individuals and businesses in this area.

Many of our clients are Citrus fruit growers. Our staff are in the unique position of monitoring the business performance and income of these families, and recent years have showed a devastating downturn. Discussion with industry people reinforced by documentation, shows that low fruit prices have offset all improvements in productivity and efficiency by these producers. As a result, even the largest fruit growing operators have not been viable for years.

Although there are a few peripheral issues, overwhelming evidence proves that fruit imported from countries such as Brazil and "dumped" on the Australian market depressing prices, has destroyed local growers competitiveness. These families are in the position not only of being unable to earn a living from their properties, but not being able to sell out. Flow-on effects for business serving the industry, and the towns are obvious.

Though not claiming expertise in the fruit industry, our firm believes tariff protection is essential, otherwise the Citrus industry, together with its support services, town, and social structure will not survive much longer.

Yours faithfully,

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MANAGER
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