

Media Release 25/11/09

GM canola grower and critics meet

GM canola grower and ex-MP Marshall Bailleau is invited to talk to GM critics at a protest meeting in the Beaconsfield Neighbourhood Centre (Cnr O'Neil Rd and Old Princes Highway, Beaconsfield) at 7.30pm tonight. He is one of three speakers.

"The GM crop on his farm "Minta" at 108 Soldiers Rd Berwick is near housing estates where the gardens and farms of local residents and growers may be contaminated by GM canola pollen and seed," says Gene Ethics Director, Bob Phelps.

"Home owners are entitled to know that GM canola:

- is being grown in their neighbourhood;
- poses health and allergy risks to residents; and
- contamination may be permanent," he says.

"Better late than never, the City of Casey and Cardinia Shire are both investigating policy on GM, in response to community outrage at GM being grown in the area," he says.

"We urge the councils to declare their areas GM-free and to call on the state government to have Baillieu's canola crop removed immediately.

"We also call for strict liability on GM canola growers. charged levies for a compensation fund to meet any damage or loss suffered by non-GM or organic growers, beekeepers, and other primary producers.

"If Bailleau's GM plot were in Tasmania or South Australia, it would be a GM contamination site, monitored for up to 10 years by the Agriculture Department, to manage persistent GM canola weeds," says Jessica Harrison of Cropwatch.

"The Tasmanian Government is still monitoring and decontaminating 52 GM canola trial sites contaminated in the 1990s.

"Mr Bailleau must warn his neighbours, contract harvesters and transport company that his crop is GM canola. Decontaminating a harvester cost up to \$400/hour for five hours," she says.

"The closest GrainCorp depot for receipt of GM canola is at Geelong, 120 kms away. Every roadside between Berwick and Geelong will be exposed to GM contamination as canola seed is routinely dropped along the way to the port," she says.

"Monsanto, VicRoads and Agriculture Minister Joe Helper's office all refused to clean up GM canola from roadsides when we found contamination in the Western District," Ms Harrison says.

"GM contamination is absolutely unacceptable and Baillieu's crop must be removed before it irreversibly damages the local environment," Ms Harrison concludes.

Further comment:

Gene Ethics - Bob Phelps 0449 769 066

GM Cropwatch - Jessica Harrison 0407 307 231