

SE News
HD **Sick food policy canned**

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WC 391 words

PD 29 October 2014

SN Weekly Times

SC HERWEK

ED WeeklyTimes

PG 3

LA English

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THE Victorian Government's \$22 **million** bailout of fruit processor SPC Ardmona is being undermined by its own Health Department.

More than half the canned and packaged fruit served in Victoria's public hospitals comes from overseas, including from **China**, Italy, the US, South Africa, Thailand and Vietnam, a department report has revealed.

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That's despite lobbying by Goulburn Valley-based SPC Ardmona and farmers for more than 18 months for an Australian-first procurement policy.

SPC Ardmona managing director Peter Kelly said while "everyone wants to help, no one does". "They support it in principle but they don't do anything about it," he said.

Victorian Farmers Federation president Peter Tuohey said it lacked logic that "our political leaders are investing \$22 **million** to support local jobs, farmers and the produce that flows out of SPCA's Shepparton plant" but the "Department of Health is feeding public hospital patients, mainly imported canned and packaged fruit".

The Government's \$22 **million** assistance package to SPC Ardmona in February came with Premier Denis Napthine's assurance he would leave "no stone unturned" in ensuring the survival of the **company** and industry for the region.

A report by Health Purchasing Victoria, seen by The Weekly Times, shows just 44 per cent of canned fruit used in Victorian public hospitals came from Australia, with 17 per cent coming from **China**, almost 9 per cent from Italy and 4 per cent from the US. Fruit is also sourced from South Africa, Thailand and Vietnam. There are also concerns about the safety of the imported fruit with the Health Department revealing one sample of **Chinese** peaches had a **lead** content twice the Australian standard.

SPC and other industry bodies including the VFF, the Australian Food and Grocery Council, AusVeg and Apple and Pear Australia Ltd have stepped up calls for a Victorian food procurement policy to be adopted by all State Government departments and agencies before next month's Victorian election.

A spokesman for Health Minister David Davis said Mr Davis had met with SPC Ardmona and "changes have been made to information provided by Health Purchasing Victoria to assist health services to **purchase** Victorian produce".

Claims regarding the presence of **lead** in imported products were not substantiated by independent testing, the spokesman said. • Your say, Page 21

CO spcast : SPC Ardmona Ltd | victff : Victorian Farmers Federation | amtl : Coca-Cola Amatil Ltd | coca : The Coca-Cola Company

IN i41 : Food/Beverages/Tobacco | i414 : Food Preserving/Speciality Foods | icnp : Consumer Goods | ifood : Food Products

RE austr : Australia | victor : Victoria (Australia) | apacz : Asia Pacific | ausnz : Australia/Oceania

PUB News Ltd.

AN Document HERWEK0020141028eaat0002a