



Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard Thursday, 17 September 2009

BANANA IMPORTS

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (6.24 pm): On 13 November 2008 I stood in this place and pledged my full support to the Australian banana industry in its legitimate fight against imported bananas from the Philippines. The day before, Biosecurity Australia had regrettably handed down its final import risk analysis recommending that bananas could be safely imported into Australia if the Philippines could meet certain risk management measures. Ten months later, the fight against imports continues and my support for the Australian banana industry is complete and ongoing.

Since November last year, there has been yet another inquiry by the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee of the Australian Senate into the import risk analysis for the importation of bananas from the Philippines. Thank goodness for this Senate committee and its reports in recent years. It has consistently exposed fundamental errors and serious questions about the rigour and appropriateness of the import risk analysis process utilised by Biosecurity Australia to make its recommendations.

The Senate committee has been consistently critical of Biosecurity Australia's recommendations. Amongst the conclusions of the committee's latest report from June 2009 is a finding that the analyses of possible risk management measures in the final IRA report are, in essence, hypothetical. The committee points out that the recommended quarantine measures proposed by Biosecurity Australia are not based on current laboratory or field trials in the Philippines, nor have they been tested in commercial conditions.

How could Biosecurity Australia possibly hand down a recommendation supporting the importation of bananas from the Philippines in these circumstances? How could the Rudd Labor government and the federal minister for agriculture, Tony Burke, possibly accept such recommendations from Biosecurity Australia, based on hypotheticals and quarantine measures that are unproven and even untested? The banana industry in Queensland is also entitled to know what the state Minister for Primary Industries, Tim Mulherin, is actively doing to support the banana industry, given the importance of the industry to North Queensland.

Today, I table a petition signed by 2,666 people from my electorate of Hinchinbrook, which grows about two-thirds of Australia's bananas, from across Queensland, which grows about 90 per cent of Australia's bananas, and from across Australia.

Tabled paper: Non-conforming petition regarding banana imports from the Philippines [\[935\]](#).

The people of North Queensland, in particular, are aware of the significant threat posed by imported bananas to the local industry and local jobs, but there are many Australians who understand the importance of maintaining the strength and integrity of Australia's quarantine system and biosecurity and value the supply of a quality, clean and green fruit which is a staple in Australian shopping trolleys. The petitioners support the campaign being led by the Australian Banana Growers Council opposing imported bananas from the Philippines because of the unacceptable risk of exotic pests and diseases being brought into Australia and the threat they pose to our domestic banana industry and our environment. Imported bananas are not needed or wanted in Australia. I fully support the petitioners.