



Speech by

Mr RUSSELL COOPER

MEMBER FOR CROWS NEST

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CADMIUM LEVELS IN PEANUTS

Mr COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (7.25 p.m.): Following hard upon the heels of problems in the pork industry and the dairy industry, it seems that we have some problems looming in relation to the peanut industry. A prominent grower and irrigator of Coominya in the Brisbane Valley has brought to my attention that, at a meeting on 30 July 1998 of the ANZFA, State Health Ministers and/or Primary Industries Ministers decided that the cadmium levels in peanuts would be adjusted to meet World Health Organisation levels.

Currently, there is no formal level; however, indications are that it will be set at 0.1 ppb, which is currently double the level of the Australian standard, which is 0.05 ppb. That would mean that in future, when importers try to lower the safe level for peanuts, the standard will already be in place. This is a backdoor way to significantly lower the domestic price at the expense of the Queensland industry. In the fight that the coalition Government won 12 months ago, Ministers Perrett and Horan did a lot of work on cadmium levels. PCA and Jorgenson Waring both support the retention of the 0.05 ppb level. Together those shellers process 100% of the Australian crop.

Australian consumers should not have to lower their standards; rather, the world should rise to meet the Australian standards. The Minister and I should do all that we possibly can to ensure that those levels are kept at a safe standard and try to defend the Queensland peanut industry before those people start to move in an unsafe way to lower the standards. We should ensure that we defend the Queensland peanut industry before this gets too far out of hand.
