



Speech by

**Hon. RUSSELL COOPER**

**MEMBER FOR CROWS NEST**

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Hansard 18 August 1999

#### **CADMIUM IN PEANUTS**

**Hon. T. R. COOPER** (Crows Nest—NPA) (10.25 a.m.): The Beattie Government's betrayal of Queensland's peanut industry and consumers has led to a doubling of the maximum allowable cadmium levels in peanuts by the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Council. The Beattie Government is now obligated to help peanut farmers counter the threat of a flood of cheap, poor quality imported peanuts.

Queensland's position has been hopelessly compromised after the Beattie Government formally agreed to the increase in a letter to the Federal Government on 29 July last year. The inevitable impact of the Beattie Government's failure to maintain high standards for peanuts is an increase in cheap, poor quality imports. Our producers deserve some assistance to compete with the likes of the USA, which is currently considering nearly \$17 billion in farm aid, \$45m in direct income assistance for peanut producers and country-of-origin labelling for peanuts and peanut products.

The Minister for Primary Industries, Henry Palaszczuk, has a responsibility to ensure that our peanut farmers are well equipped to handle the fallout from his Government's ineptitude. The former coalition Government's defeat of an attempt to increase maximum allowable cadmium levels in 1997 was in stark contrast to the Beattie Government's failure to advocate consumers' interests. The coalition Government was so concerned about the implications for consumers that it threatened to withdraw from ANZFA.

This decision has proved that the Health Minister, Wendy Edmond, is not up to the task of advocating consumer interests around the food standards council table. The Beattie Government must now revoke its opposition to country-of-origin labelling. Mrs Edmond should also support calls to include details of cadmium contents in peanuts and peanut product labelling so that consumers are able to make an informed choice. The coalition demands that the Beattie Government provide a strategy to restore peanut growers' and consumers' confidence.

Australia sets high standards in terms of cadmium levels for peanuts of 0.05 milligrams per kilogram. The overseas standard is 0.1 milligram per kilogram. Other countries should be made to rise to our standard of health levels in our products and not drag Australia down to their level by flooding this country with cheap imports.

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