



Speech by

**Hon. RUSSELL COOPER**

**MEMBER FOR CROWS NEST**

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Hansard 8 December 1999

### **IMPORTATION OF FRESH DURIAN**

**Hon. T. R. COOPER** (Crows Nest—NPA) (10.10 a.m.): I wish to bring to the attention of the House yet another example of imports adversely affecting our primary producers. This time it is the importation of fresh durian fruit from Thailand. Primary producers are in dire straits and many may even be forced off the land in the near future, particularly the sugarcane farmers of far-north Queensland. To make matters even worse, they now face the problem that fresh imports will be allowed, which could lead to the introduction of pests and diseases that could decimate our Australian industries, not to mention cause a market collapse.

Some canegrowers have diversified into horticultural crops such as durian, rambutan, mangosteen, bananas and pawpaws as a support income to help them stay on the land. This source of income is now threatened by AQIS agreeing to allow Thailand to export fresh durian fruit to Australia, and the process to allow bananas and pawpaws to enter Australia is also in the pipeline.

Three hundred to 400 tonnes of frozen durian from Thailand have been imported annually for many years. We have no objection to those frozen durian imports as the frozen durian fruit poses no threat of the dreaded durian seed borer establishing in Australia. This pest entering Australia could be equivalent to the papaya fruit fly episode.

We have until only 16 December to appeal against the AQIS decision to allow the importation of fresh durian fruit. This case is the forerunner of what is to come for other horticultural crops. It is therefore imperative that we fight this appeal in a unified way. I am fully aware that the Minister has details and I believe that he should join with the coalition in defending our primary producers from such imports in order to give them a fair go.

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