



Speech by

**KEN TURNER**

**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

---

Hansard 19 October 2000

### **FOOD PRODUCTION [SAFETY] BILL**

**Mr TURNER** (Thuringowa—IND) (2.52 p.m.): I support the thrust of the Food Production (Safety) Bill 2000, but there are some things that no amount of legislation can address. Legislation alone is not enough; it needs to be coupled with a total community awareness program.

I also question the costs that are continuously put on to the food industry, and I hope the Minister and the Government will look at that and assist where possible because things in the rural sector are not financially bright. We must apply rules that are cost-effective in relation to the risk of illness that could occur from certain sections of the industry.

Legislation can never achieve major results in introducing hygiene into the food industry. The way to guarantee results is through increased knowledge, motivation and behavioural change. The training of managers and staff is essential. For example, it has been proven in food processing establishments that the most important source of contamination is transmission by hand. Therefore, emphasis must be placed on increased understanding by staff of the consequences of not adequately washing hands, knives and utensils.

The impact of manpower has not received enough attention. People working in a production line are only effective if all those people carry out the same hygiene standards—a break in the chain, and the whole system collapses.

Not only education, but the ability of staff to access cleaning facilities quickly and conveniently without any inconvenience is paramount—otherwise it does not happen. It requires a team effort from the top, down to the floor cleaners, whether it be a small snackbar or a processing factory. The achievements of hygiene studies are clear. Not one of today's hygiene problems is insoluble in theory; yet, in practice, when problems occur, they are nearly always caused by human negligence, and only constant monitoring, training and involvement by workers in the process will achieve the desired results. It is important that funding be cost-effective. It should be targeted at correcting the most affected areas of hygiene, and that is undoubtedly in the area of processed food.

One of the most significant reasons for the rise in food-borne illness is the lifestyle change in our society. More people are eating out, eating takeaway foods, and eating ready-prepared foods to cook at home. 60-80% of food-borne illness arises from the food service industry. Dangerous strains of bacteria and viruses such as salmonella and E. coli have been responsible for nearly all incidences of large-scale food poisoning over the last few years, and all were from value-adding by follow-on industries.

I believe that fruit and vegetable growers should not be lumbered in with high-risk animal husbandry and should be classified in the low-risk category. Recently, Freshcare was launched. This implements an auditing system and extra food and water testing for the grower. This translates into the fruit and vegetable farmer—often already on the breadline—forking out more money to comply.

Growers are not against safe food programs that make sense, but with low-risk product they do object to overregulation. Many of our growers are single-person or family businesses who cannot afford these extra costs. We should not want to have our community dependent upon food imported from other countries. We must ensure that we do not drive our farmers out of business through unnecessary regulations.

We should be actively promoting food safety in the home where many food-borne illnesses occur. In all areas of food processing, from home to factory, knowledge, motivation, education and behavioural change is the key.

---