



Speech by

CHRIS CUMMINS

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Hansard 20 August 2002

ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (3.14 p.m.): I rise to speak on the Animal and Plant Health Legislation Amendment Bill. The bill amends key provisions of the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981, the Stock Act 1925, the Fisheries Act 1924, the Plant Protection Act 1989 and Agricultural Standards Act 1994. The aim of these amendments is to achieve the optimum legislative capacity to prepare for and respond to outbreaks of devastating animal diseases, such as foot-and-mouth disease—FMD—and BSE, and aquatic animal diseases, such as white spot syndrome virus of prawns. The bill will also provide a legislative framework under the Plant Protection Act 1989 to underpin a regulatory response aimed at preventing further introductions and facilitating control of spread and eradication of two species of exotic fire ants that have been detected across the state.

I commend the minister and his department for what I believe has been excellent proactive work by DPI. That work has been recognised not only across Queensland but all over Australia. Fire ants are a terrible menace in many places in America. We have responded positively and tackled the issue. Luckily, my electorate of Kawana on the Sunshine Coast has not had an issue.

Mr Briskey: My electorate has.

Mr CUMMINS: While many electorates have, many have remained free of it due to some of the very good work that has been and is continuing to be done.

This bill is the result of a number of reviews by government animal health authorities in all jurisdictions on Australia's preparedness in relation to preventive measures and emergency response capacity for FMD, in particular, and BSE in the light of the current FMD and BSE experiences in Britain and Europe. The effects of this disease are felt not only in Britain and Europe. I lived there for close to two years at a time when there were concerns about British beef. Even today people in my position are not encouraged to give blood because of that potential exposure. This has an effect on many people.

I turn now to the anthrax threats following the terrorist attacks of last year. I wish to advise members about the scares that occurred on the Sunshine Coast. I suggest that members and their staff should not do what one Sunshine Coast federal member's staff did when white powder was received in their office. They gave it a taste test. I do not think we should be trying to identify anthrax ourselves.

Ms Molloy: Who was that?

Mr CUMMINS: If the member is big enough he will own up to that himself. Only two federal members' offices were threatened. The advice from police was not to test it ourselves but to isolate the threat and call the police.

While some may see the amendments proposed as being extremely tough, they are the minimum needed to successfully address these pest and disease outbreaks without undue impact on the community as a whole. I commend the minister and his department and commend the bill to the House.
