




Speech by

Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Hansard Wednesday, 26 October 2011

BIOSECURITY AUSTRALIA, PINEAPPLE INDUSTRY

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (10.21 pm): On 19 October, just last week, Biosecurity Australia released a draft import risk analysis report for fresh decrowned pineapple fruit from Malaysia. The draft IRA summary statement declares—

Biosecurity Australia proposes that the importation of fresh decrowned pineapple fruit to Australia from Malaysia be permitted subject to a range of quarantine conditions. The draft report identifies four pests that require quarantine measures.

I suggest that such a proposition is flawed and dangerous and that the Queensland Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies needs to support the Australian pineapple producers. More importantly, he needs to support Queensland's pineapple producers, and he needs to stand up for the health and wellbeing not only of the industry but also of Queenslanders more broadly.

Those four pests that Biosecurity Australia refer to are the *Dysmicoccus grassii*, *Dysmicoccus neobrevipes* or grey pineapple mealy bug, *Planococcus minor* or Pacific mealy bug, and *Pseudococcus jackbeardsleyi* or the Jack Beardsley mealy bug. Basically they are a range of exotic borers that have the potential to decimate local pineapple crops.

How does Biosecurity Australia suggest we address this quarantine issue? Through a combination of pre-shipment or on arrival methyl bromide fumigation and an operational system to verify the status of the imported fruit. Can I suggest fumigation with methyl bromide will not sit well with Australian consumers? Methyl bromide is not registered in Australia for use on pineapples and there is worldwide concern with its use, particularly its link to the destruction of the ozone layer. It is a massive concern that importers could potentially be allowed to circumvent national chemical registration regulations by fumigating fruit offshore with this chemical. What would that do to our reputation?

If we put methyl bromide fumigation aside for a moment, perhaps what is even more concerning is what is not in the draft IRA. In 2008 the Australian pineapple industry biosecurity plan listed the *Erwinia chrysanthemi*, now *Dickeya*, species as the most important of forbidden pathogens. The pathogen causes bacterial fruit and heart rot in pineapples, and the industry experts pointed out at the time quite clearly that it does not exist and still does not exist in the Australian pineapple industry. It does, however, exist in the Philippines, from which we already import fresh pineapples, and Malaysia, from which we are considering to import fresh pineapples.

Despite regular scientific and industry advice, Biosecurity Australia has ignored the risk this pathogen poses to the industry. I am sorry, but as a member of an electorate that is home to 80 per cent of Queensland's fresh pineapple production, I am not willing to ignore that risk. I implore the Minister for Agriculture to petition his federal counterpart and Biosecurity Australia and reject this proposed import approval. I implore every Queenslanders concerned at this serious biosecurity risk to send in their submission by the 19 December closing date.