



Speech by


# Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Hansard Friday, 14 September 2012

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## GINGER INDUSTRY

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (8.49 pm): I rise to share with the house the plight of and seek support for the Australian ginger farming families in my area, who need a secure and viable future. I have spoken before about Biosecurity Australia and its report, which has been poorly drafted using loose science and lack of references. The problem we have is that the report clearly undervalues many of the insect pests and diseases that could be contained in imported soils. Many of the pests and diseases present in Fiji are of concern to the Australian environment and the ginger industry, and also pose a serious risk to other Queensland crops, such as bananas, citrus, sweet potatoes, pineapples and nursery plants which could be infected.

The ginger industry is disappointed with the outcomes presented from the final provisional import risk assessment for fresh ginger from Fiji. It is the opinion of industry and our team of highly qualified scientists that information provided to DAFF Biosecurity has not been sufficiently addressed in the risk mitigation outcomes. Not only have these fallen well short of the science provided for their assessment, there are questions about the process undertaken by the department and the way the final provisions have been produced.

With these issues and concerns confronting the Australian ginger industry, I support the industry's call that there be a federal Senate inquiry undertaken to investigate the final provisions IRA and the process by which DAFF Biosecurity has reached this outcome. The inquiry should look closely at Biosecurity Australia's provisional final import risk analysis report for fresh ginger from Fiji and give ginger growers the opportunity to provide evidence on the public record.

My motivation is to maintain security for our growers. Our ginger is a world-class product that is marketed globally and our processing partners need security. The fresh ginger market is quality assured and has always been available for year-round supply. The industry employs over 2,000 people with a net worth in excess of \$100 million. Ginger is the latest agricultural crop to be threatened by the introduction of species and diseases from overseas imports.

On 13 August the provisional final import risk analysis report was released by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. It identified yam scale as a biosecurity risk that Fijian exporters must manage. Australian ginger growers have also taken objection to methyl bromide fumigation, either in Fiji or on arrival in Australia. Clearly that will not work. Ginger is a crop that is easily replanted and this presents its own problems, such as the introduction of other soil-borne diseases in the imported ginger rhizomes.

We cannot risk the future viability of our agricultural industries, which is why a Senate inquiry must be held to examine the risks associated with allowing fresh ginger into Australia. Once diseases are introduced from overseas, they are extremely difficult to eradicate and can have devastating economic consequences. I thank federal member for Hinkler, Paul Neville, and Senator Ron Boswell for their continued support and advocacy for growers in the Burnett. We look forward to the visit to Burnett by shadow agriculture minister John Cobb and we sincerely hope that that visit will have some significant success in securing a Senate inquiry.