



Speech By
Hon. Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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ADJOURNMENT

Ginger Imports

 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (8.29 pm): I would normally say it is a great honour to rise and speak in this chamber, but tonight I rise very frustrated and very concerned about what is going on in our horticultural industry here in this state and I must admit with an element of, 'We told you so.' Some 2½ or three years ago I stood in this House, along with a number of colleagues, and raised significant concerns about the then federal Labor government's import risk analysis being done on pineapples and ginger, particularly fresh pineapples coming in from Malaysia and the likely import of fresh ginger from Fiji.

At that time the horticultural growers in the electorate of Glass House and in the neighbouring electorate of Nicklin, supported by horticulturalists in Bundaberg and the Burnett, were saying, 'We can compete on price. We can compete on quality. This is not about protectionism. This is about biosecurity. Our concerns are that in both of those two industries—the pineapple and ginger industries—there are diseases and pests in Malaysia, the Philippines and Fiji that will wipe out our horticultural crops as we know them if they take a foothold in this nation.'

I hate to say it, but what we warned of back then is coming to pass. We were told that all of these nations would be required to treat the imported goods with methyl bromide. I must admit, as I did back then, that that is something we do not allow our own horticulturalists to use. But the then federal government was quite willing to allow imported goods to be treated with methyl bromide and believed that that would treat any issue.

Just recently live root knot nematodes were found in a shipment of fresh ginger from Fiji. Root knot nematode is found in Australia. But what it demonstrates is that if the more risky and dangerous burrowing nematode gets through what is regarded as a biosecurity barrier and into this nation then we can kiss goodbye all of our wonderful ginger producers in this wonderful state. If we see that occur in ginger then we are likely to see it in our pineapple crops as well.

I commend the state Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Minister McVeigh, for raising this with his federal colleague. I am appalled at the response of our now federal coalition colleague in Canberra who has said that this has all been looked at before. It has. It was wrong. It needs to be stopped. Let us ban their import while we review the position. Let us go back to the basics and protect our precious horticultural industry in this state.

(Time expired)