



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE
PROOF
MATTERS OF URGENCY

Food Labelling

SPEECH

Monday, 2 March 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

SPEECH

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Questioner	Responder
Speaker Lambie, Sen Jacqui	Question No.

Senator LAMBIE (Tasmania) (16:46): The motion is:

The need for the Abbott Government to Immediately implement Country of Origin food labelling legislation to protect public health and Australian farmers.

I acknowledge the good work of the Greens have done in bringing this important matter before this parliament not only today but for many years.

There is no doubt that a crisis has developed around the country of origin food labelling matter, and the recent infections of Australian people with hepatitis A from imported and frozen berries has given a sharper focus to this matter. I still cannot understand why Australians would want to buy berries from overseas countries when you could buy fresh berries from Tasmanian or other Australian state. Perhaps people were fooled into thinking that the berries which came in a package branded with the name of Nanna's were from Australia.

Nanna is a very Australian term, and I have to acknowledge that it is a brilliant piece of marketing. Just saying the name 'Nanna' for many people causes wonderful warm, secure and loving memories to come to mind. Such is the power of a word which reminds us of people in our lives who had such a positive impact on our lives. Whenever Nanna cooked for us or gave us anything, it was good, it was healthy and it was safe. No Australian would ever expect to get hep. A from any food that Nanna gave us. Now we have products from overseas that are labelled 'Nanna', but our overseas nanna has pooped in the food.

How did this situation develop? This government has allowed an imported food testing and safety system to develop which tests imports for pesticides and chemicals but fails to test for microbial or bacterial dangers such as hep. A et cetera. How did that happen? If you ask any primary producer or fisher and say, 'How do we help you compete against imported products?' they will all say, 'Make sure that imported product is subjected to the same food safety standard checks that Australian grown products have to go through.'

And this speaks to the core of the problem. If the consumer knows that it is an Australian product manufactured and packaged here under our industrial relations laws and food safety standards, they will buy it. At the moment we have all these overseas products pretending to be Australian, and successive governments have allowed this injustice to continue. So today, on behalf of Tasmanians, I say enough is enough. Let's take the first step and introduce clearer labelling for all the foods on our supermarket shelves.

In closing, I would highly recommend you look at Tasmanian fruit, vegetable and produce. It is the freshest, tastiest, cleanest food in the world, and I would know because I am a very proud Tasmanian.

Question agreed to.