



The Hon. **JOHN COBB**

Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Food Security  
Federal Member for Calare

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Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2011

## Labor crumbles over apple imports

“TODAY I have circulated a Private Members’ Bill to safeguard against fire blight in the face of the Gillard Government issuing permits to import apples from New Zealand,” Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Food Security John Cobb announced this morning.

“Australia’s robust, science-based quarantine protections must not be compromised. Our pest and disease-free status has been hard won and the government’s bid to rubber stamp NZ apples into Australia, without the same checks and balances applied to other countries, sets a dangerous precedent.

“While we have AQIS inspectors on the ground in China undertaking rigorous checks, in NZ we are expected to simply accept that their practices adequately manage their endemic fire blight risk – despite not having a single inspector to check that they are doing the right thing.

“Apples are apples and the same scientific standards should be applied to apples regardless of where they are imported from.

“The Coalition is so concerned with the lapsing state of quarantine and biosecurity in Australia that we have put forward the *Quarantine Legislation Amendment (Apples) Bill 2011*, a Bill which makes a permit to import apples a disallowable instrument<sup>i</sup>.

“This Bill puts the government and Biosecurity Australia on notice that if they ignore the science and put trade before quarantine, the Parliament can disallow permits and direct them to ensure adequate protections against foreign pests and diseases are in place.

“Biosecurity Australia needs to clearly justify the risk factors and why it Australia is allowing lower standards for New Zealand than the requirement to import apples from China.

“I am astonished that the Australian Government can issue this draft Import Risk Analysis without having full access to New Zealand’s integrated fruit production manual and without completion of the protocols for pack houses and border control points.

“There is a very real risk of fire blight entering Australia and of the 49 countries that have contracted fire blight, not one has eradicated it.

“For the government to recklessly pursue the importation of New Zealand apples without adequately managing the risk of fire blight would be a death sentence for our nation’s apple producers.

“This decision to make the permit to import apples a disallowable instrument is not a decision we have taken lightly but such is the lax attitude towards biosecurity by this government we were left no other choice.

“Labor has already failed to contain the Myrtle Rust and Asian bee incursions and we will not stand by while the government continues to ignore glaring failures in proactively protecting Australia’s shores from pests and diseases.

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<sup>i</sup> A disallowable instrument must be notified in the Gazette and must be laid before each House of Parliament within 15 sitting days of the making of the instrument. The instrument will come into effect if:

- no motion of disallowance has been moved within 15 sitting days in either House, or
- such a motion has been withdrawn or defeated.
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