



Dairying in the Tropics

"Cheelonga Farming"

Ray Graham
Donna Graham

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to you to voice my support for the Fair Milk Price – Logos Submission put to Parliament by Katter Party member for Dalrymple, Shane Knuth.

With the recent decimation of the Southern dairy industry and the continued decline of our Queensland industry since the "MILK PRICE WAR" on Australia Day 2011; radical progressive action needs to be forthcoming if we are to retain any dairy industry in this country.

As the largest dairy enterprise in FNQ, we maintain an active, positive influence within our local communities; employing 16 staff from the small rural remote area of Millaa Millaa. I would like to give you a snap shot of a day at "Cheelonga":-
Alarm goes off at 2:30 am – up and out of bed to make a coffee to go, in the ATV to muster one of the 4 herds we milk twice a day 365 days a year! Cows at the dairy to be milked – set gates for the next paddock, feed ration out, cows onto the feed pad, collect the cows and calves, feed the new born heifers, treat and check any sick animals, clean up after milking usually all done by 9 am – NO breakfast yet.... fix the fences, fill the water tanks and troughs, do the next feed ration, sort extra groups of cows – may have time for a quick snack – sort and organize the daily tasks for staff, touch base with each dairy team, into the office for the hard core stuff- rosters- accounts- HR- back to the machinery shed for the regular maintenance of all machinery add to the list any new breakdowns and on the spot repairs – OH skip lunch – it milking time again. Call the Kids on the 2-way "How was your day at school? See you at dinner!" A 7pm finish is a nice surprise. Any takers for a week working alongside us at Cheelonga Farming?

A dairy farming family is becoming an endangered species, we work with our families and animals in a business we love; to produce a quality product – we do this with pride and it saddens me to see my grandchildren taking to social media to express their frustrations over the continued stress levels, tiredness and the constant pressure of trying to keep the family farm for the next generation. For many family dairy businesses there is great emotional stress as well as financial pressure adding to an already dire situation.

With continued input cost increases to our business; such as wages, electricity, feed, transport, fuel and all compliance issues adding to this we have had no price increase for the past 3 years – we can no longer maintain a viable, profitable, ecologically sustainable business – we NEED to force a change and introduce some form of fair and transparent pricing system back into our industry.

No business should be forced to produce a product for below the cost of production, especially when we are all demanding an ethical, environmentally friendly, safe, quality product produced by Australians' employing Australians – the consumer has shown recently how they are willing to support their local dairy industry by buying local brands. Unfortunately the supermarket giants are too short sighted and are looking to profit instead of sustainability. I urge you all to think about these issues while drinking your next Flat White or cappuccino – have you done everything within your power to assist our Queensland Dairy Industry become a strong resilient leader in the Australian Agricultural sector?

Yours sincerely,

CHEELONGA FARMING