



Speech by

**Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK**

**MEMBER FOR INALA**

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Hansard 11 November 1998

### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

#### **Pork Industry**

**Hon. H. PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries) (10 a.m.), by leave: Friday, 13 November, is already known as black Friday. But I fear that Friday could become an even darker day for Queensland with the Productivity Commission due to hand down the findings of its inquiry into the pig and pig meat industries.

The pork industry has faced more than a year of dark days since the Federal Government announced that imports of cooked manufactured product from Canada and frozen product from Denmark would be permitted. Since his re-election last month, John Howard has told the Australian people that his new Government is going to be different. Well, I concede that it is different—in size only. But the coalition is already back to its old tricks, like turning Centrelink into the missing link and making sure that Job Network does not work.

I fear that the pork industry is going to be punished by John Howard and Tim Fischer for the courageous stand that it took before and during the Federal election campaign. I fear that the industry's pleas for help will again be turned against it by the coalition in Canberra. Last night, industry expressed concern that this new-look Federal Government was preparing to sit on the Productivity Commission report. Pork producers and their families have been forced to wait too long by this Federal Government. Time is something that many pork producers do not have. Many are waiting to see what Christmas brings but, come January, many will have to make some very hard decisions. The Queensland Pork Producers Organisation have projected their membership to be 280 on 1 January 1999. This has come back from 410 at 1 January this year.

As Primary Industries Minister in the Beattie Labor Government, I can say that I will not rest until our pork producers get a fairer deal from the Federal Government. I am appealing to all members opposite to join with me to push for a fairer deal out of Canberra, because Queensland families depend on it. In today's Australian Financial Review, Alan Oxley, a former chairman of GATT—the predecessor of the World Trade Organisation—makes a very important contribution to the issue. He said—

"The circumstances of the pork industry seem to fit perfectly with the WTO safeguards case."

Alan Oxley went on to say today—

"Some in Government may believe that rejection of the claim by the pork industry is a good way of underlining the Government's commitment to free trade. This would be a mistaken view."

It would be a very mistaken view, and it is a view that this Government does not take.

The Department of Primary Industries' submission to the Productivity Commission is comprehensive and it recommends that a short-term tariff be seriously considered. The DPI submission says that there is a very strong argument for safeguard measures to be imposed. The submission details material damage suffered by the Queensland pork industry. The submission makes it very clear that any measures of assistance or safeguard action should not put the international trading arrangements for other primary products at risk.

There are a number of telling points in the DPI's submission. But one that really stands out is a comment by Colin Stewart, the Managing Director of Better Blend Stockfeed on the Darling Downs. Mr Stewart said—

"Our company is part of an agricultural group of companies, directly employing 60 staff, and is the second largest employer in our home-based town in Oakey.

The spin-off effects of the collapse of our group would be severely felt in our community, and this pig industry debacle has the potential to make this a reality."

I want to urge all members in this place, especially the members opposite, to back our producers at every corner. I would again urge all Federal members—some of whom are sitting in Parliament for the first time—to take a stand in Canberra and put some positive action behind any positive words that they give our pork producers. Any risk to communities like Oakey is too much risk. There is no room for politicking on the pork industry plight; it is just too important.

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