



Speech by

**Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK**

**MEMBER FOR INALA**

---

Hansard 19 November 1998

**PRIMARY INDUSTRIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Hon. H. PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries) (5.15 p.m.), in reply: I commend the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 1998 to the House. The Bill makes amendments to a number of Acts and most of those amendments are uncontroversial. However, the amendments to the Brands Act have caused a lot of consternation amongst honourable members opposite.

The issue of branding practices in Queensland and their impact on the value of hides is not new. Indeed, this issue has arisen throughout most of the century. Each time it has been raised, a handful of traditionalists have stopped the change, despite the fact that it would have benefited most producers. Indeed, this amendment has the support of the Cattlemen's Union and the United Graziers Association. It is those groups that want these changes introduced. The Beef Industry Development Advisory Council also supports these changes.

However, last year that was not enough for the National Party. Amendments were proposed, but they were pulled by the Government. I well remember the debate when the amendments that were supposed to be introduced were pulled at the last minute. I was amazed about that, because those amendments had the full support of the cattle industry.

In contrast, this Government puts these amendments forward on behalf of the industry and on behalf of Queensland. I have found a letter, written by the Prime Minister of Australia to the Premier of Queensland, complaining of the lost revenue from bad branding practices. It was sent from the Prime Minister's office in Melbourne, not Canberra. The letter is dated 18 November 1918—80 years ago yesterday. It is a pity that the Bill did not come up yesterday. In that letter, the then acting Prime Minister stated—

"Upwards of two million cattle are slaughtered annually in the Commonwealth, and as the majority of these are badly branded, it will be readily realised that the sum of money thus lost to the country is very considerable."

The letter concludes—

"I should be glad, therefore, if you would be so good as to consider the question of taking action to prevent hides being damaged through the causes referred to."

Will we have to wait another 80 years for the Brands Act to be amended? Will we have to wait another 80 years for action to be taken to improve the value of Queensland hides? Will we have to wait another 80 years to give our hard-pressed producers this new source of revenue? Will we have to wait another 80 years for the National Party to start acting in the interests of the cattle industry as a whole, instead of a few of its narrow-minded supporters? The answer to those questions is no.

I believe that this Government is acting in the best interests of the cattle industry. We are not beholden to special interest groups. We are not afraid to make the changes that are needed and we are not afraid to act. We will not let this intolerable situation drag on for another 80 years. I throw down the gauntlet to honourable members opposite: do the right thing.

I turn now to the contributions of honourable members. I believe the honourable member for Crows Nest is in agreement with most of the Bill with the exception of the provisions in relation to the Brands Act. I am sure that he will raise those issues during the Committee stage. The honourable

member for Kallangur made an enlightened contribution to the debate on the legislation this afternoon. The honourable member for Gregory, being a cattle producer, certainly knew what he was speaking about. He made an impassioned plea on behalf of producers. However, I think he has missed the boat in relation to the Brands Act.

The honourable member for Burdekin raised a couple of interesting issues. In relation to false declarations, I point out that one cannot be fined for making a mistake. The legislation states that a person must know that the declaration was false. Also, 100 penalty units is the maximum fine only, and magistrates rarely apply the maximum fine for a first-time offence.

The honourable member for Gladstone raised a number of issues. The first concerned the income flowing to producers in relation to the 10-year term, and the advice she claimed she received from the advisers last week. I think there was a bit of a misunderstanding on behalf of the honourable member for Gladstone in relation to the reference to 10 years. The point was made that until all animals currently branded on ribs are cycled out of the system—and that takes up to 10 years for a breeder—the full value of these amendments will not be realised. Buyers need to be confident that no rib-branded cattle are still in the system before they start to pay the top dollar.

In respect of the questions from the member for Gladstone about the money from the QMPDI towards meat processing, I inform the honourable member that the Queensland Meat Processing Industry Task Force, which was announced by the Honourable Deputy Premier and me in October, will work with industry to identify industries for industry development and improvement. This will include support for value adding and new product development. As part of this, the Queensland Meat Processing Development Initiative will provide the meat processing industry with funding of up to \$20m. I will leave it at that. If the honourable member wants to take up the issue further with me during the Committee stage, I am happy for her to do so.

The honourable member for Callide raised some interesting issues in relation to the Brands Act. In his contribution, the honourable member for Nicklin showed a keen interest in the branding issue. He has obviously been very well briefed on the issue by the interested parties. The honourable member for Gympie spoke about the removal of exclusivity giving producers more flexibility in order to pursue better returns and alternative sale points. I believe that is a very important point. Removing exclusivity from the markets is very important, and that will occur probably some time around the middle of next year. That will allow the Brisbane Market Authority to trade where it is. However, it will allow another player to come into the markets if it so desires.

**Mr Stephan** interjected.

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** It could be anything. It could be another market, provided somebody has the money to operate another market. It could be a market similar to the Melbourne People's Markets or the Sydney Markets. We could have another market such as those operating somewhere in Brisbane. That could happen.

---