



Speech by

**JEFF SEENEY**

**MEMBER FOR CALLIDE**

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Hansard 19 November 1998

**PRIMARY INDUSTRIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—NPA) (5.01 p.m.): Initially, I would like to commend the member for Gladstone for the obvious thought and effort that she has put into understanding this subject. Realistically, I suppose this issue is going to be decided along party lines and the votes of the Independents are going to be important. In that regard, the effort that the member for Gladstone has made to understand this issue stands in stark contrast to the efforts of the other Independent, who has not even taken the time to come into the Chamber and listen to this debate. No doubt, in a very short time he will vote on the subject that will—or has the potential at least—cause a lot of disruption to a big section of Queensland's cattle industry. That is really not the way that it should be done.

I will limit my remarks to this Bill to the proposed changes to the Brands Act. I can really only reinforce what has been said by previous speakers, especially the shadow Minister for Primary Industries, the member for Crows Nest. The issue comes down to whether or not the Government should legislate for this or it should be left to the market to pay more for hides of greater value. Obviously, we on this side of the House do not believe that this is an issue that should be legislated. I certainly believe that the easiest way to bring about a change in any practice is to offer a monetary reward to the people involved or, alternatively, to apply a monetary penalty to those who persist with the practice that is causing a devaluation of a particular product.

This issue has been a longstanding bone of contention in the cattle industry. For a long time producers have felt that they are not getting any of the right market signals, or any of the right encouragement to increase the value of their product across the whole range of their product, but particularly in terms of hides. I supplied the one processing works that put in place a trial system to pay producers for their hides according to their value. I join with the member for Crows Nest in expressing my disappointment that that trial never proceeded. It was really market pressure from the other processors who refused to follow the lead that at the time was taken by the South Burnett Co-op that led to that initiative falling by the wayside.

We do not need legislation passed in this place that tells the cattle producers of Queensland, "We think this is what is good for you so, therefore, you have to do it." We need a value-based marketing system for hides that encourages practices that will bring about the increase in returns about which the member for Kallangur spoke, even though I suggest that he did not know a lot of what he was talking about.

Given that that sort of system can be brought about, it then becomes a choice for the producer. There are a number of reasons why a producer would choose to brand in a particular place. However, those reasons belong to the individual producer. He or she can choose to decide whether or not the loss in value for their particular product is worth the maintenance of that practice. That is very much a personal choice and it should be a personal choice. It is a choice that I do not believe we as legislators need to or should take away from the individual. It really is a decision about whether or not this is a role for legislators. I certainly do not believe that it is.

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