



Speech by

Mr LEN STEPHAN

MEMBER FOR GYMPIE

Hansard 22 October 1998

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL APPROPRIATION BILL

Committee (Cognate Debate)

Estimates Committee D

Report

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie—NPA) (11.58 a.m.): It gives me great pleasure to take part in this debate, particularly as it is important to horticulture and agriculture. I note that the committee inquired into the Rural Market Development Unit and the work that it can do for potential exporters. I was also pleased to note that the Queensland Horticulture Research Development Committee is very interested in export markets and for some time has been going down that track.

The horticulture industry is involved in global competition and needs to be industry driven to satisfy customer and market needs, thus resulting in the improved profitability, sustainability and lifestyle of our growers. Research and its extension plays an integral part in maintaining and improving the industry's leading position in Australian horticulture and is vital to the industry's vision.

The Queensland Fruit and Vegetable Funding Committee has contributed \$1m for research into horticulture, which has been matched dollar for dollar by Government. Through the committee structure, industry has a direct input into the direction of horticultural research in Queensland. The importance of this research can never be underestimated. With consumer demand for high-quality fruit and vegetables, the growers themselves are under constant pressure to deliver a high-quality product, often in the face of changing market demands and environmental conditions. Continuing research will assist growers to meet those challenges. I wish them all the best and congratulate them on a job well done.

The Forest Production Program is being developed, but it has a long way to go. The committee was informed that the 1998-99 target of 450 hectares for the expansion of farm forestry plantations reflected the increased expressions of interest and equity sharing by private landowners, and is up from 335 hectares of plantations that were allocated in 1997-98. The committee was advised that during the latter part of 1998 and the early part of 1999, the department will proceed to call for expressions of interest in the purchase of a major volume of uncommitted exotic pine from the Gympie/Maryborough plantations. This will be undertaken once DPI Forestry has completed its strategic review of management options to increase the exotic pine plantations. Of course, we hope that that will proceed.

The National Competition Policy is affecting the dairy farmers in my area and throughout Queensland. Those farmers can do without this policy, which hinders what they have been doing for a long time. There is no doubt in my mind that the dairy industry is going from strength to strength.

Time expired.
