



Speech by

**Mr RUSSELL COOPER**

**MEMBER FOR CROWS NEST**

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Hansard 15 September 1998

#### **MEAT INDUSTRY**

**Mr COOPER** (Crows Nest—NPA) (10.16 a.m.): Members on both sides of the House would be aware of the closure of a number of abattoirs throughout Queensland in recent years. Towns such as Bowen, Townsville and Roma have felt the effect of these closures, which have swelled the unemployment queues and hurt local business.

Most recently—in fact on Friday—Metropolitan Quality Meats closed the doors on its Murarrie pig processing plant for the final time. Although the closure was a result of the loss of the site lease and the company will remain active in the Queensland market, 160 workers have lost their jobs and the company has relocated its processing operations to Sydney.

The Borbidge Government recognised the value of the meat industry to Queensland as one of our largest export industries and one that directly employs approximately 15,000 workers. It also identified the underlying problems in the industry that have led to these closures, namely, excess abattoir capacity and intense competitive pressures. More importantly, the Borbidge Government recognised that a positive and constructive approach by the industry and the Government could help counter those pressures and develop Queensland's meat industry into a potential world leader. The only way to achieve this and shore up jobs is for the industry to increase value adding and increase its international competitiveness.

The Borbidge Government, in full consultation with all sectors of the meat industry, including the union, developed a strategic package to encourage value adding and international competitiveness in the meat industry. That package, which was set out in the report titled "Meat processing industry at the crossroads" is ready to go. However, while the export market looks increasingly uncertain and another abattoir has closed, there has been no action by the Beattie Government to proceed with that package and shore up the future of this industry and the jobs about which this Government claims that it is so obsessed.

Queenslanders are fast coming to the conclusion that when it comes to jobs this Government is long on rhetoric and very short on action. I commend that report to the House.

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