



Speech by

SHAUN NELSON

MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS

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NATIONAL COMPETITION POLICY

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—ONP) (6.17 p.m.): I rise tonight to second the motion moved by the member for Maryborough and acknowledge the fact that his understanding of this subject is well above colouring-in book standard.

There are many good reasons to take a very close look at the effects of the National Competition Policy on Queenslanders and the Queensland economy. What does Queensland get out of competition policy besides a lousy \$40m from the Commonwealth? In an interview this year, Fred Hilmer said that the National Competition Policy was aimed at improving the living standard in society. I hate to say it, but that is a complete joke.

Let us forget all the theories about how good globalisation, rationalism and competition policy are supposed to be for us and let us consider the facts. The facts are: unemployment in Queensland is now about 9.2%, well above the national average; unemployment in regional Queensland ranges from 18% on Bribe Island to 39.3% in Mount Morgan, where 65% of the population is earning less than \$15,000 per year; bank closures in Queensland country shires have resulted in the loss of \$21m in country pay packets; and in relation to youth suicide, each week 10 young Australians kill themselves.

Queensland will receive only about \$40m compensation from Canberra for submitting to the National Competition Policy. That is only 0.25% of Queensland's Budget. But how much damage is being done to Queensland business and country communities, and how much does this cost? What is the cost to a rural community which loses a tender to a firm from interstate or overseas? There is a direct financial loss in that money will no longer be available to circulate within the local community. There is also a social cost in the form of higher unemployment, drug abuse, and, as we have seen, even suicide. I believe that many communities would prefer to keep local businesses and local people employed, even if it did cost a little more, but they are not allowed to under this ridiculous National Competition Policy.

What is wrong with wanting to keep local people and local businesses in work? So what if it costs a little more? My guess is that the damage being done to Queensland from the National Competition Policy and similar policies is much greater than the paltry \$40m offered to us by Canberra. The National Competition Policy is just one aspect of the trendy new international economic order that is destroying Australia's traditional industries, driving our jobs overseas and causing our people to commit suicide.

Mr Hayden said about 15 years ago that Australia would have to come to terms with structural or institutionalised unemployment. Bill Hayden knew the very serious problems that Australia would face in the future, as he and the Labor Party and the coalition knew very well that the policies they were implementing would destroy the traditional Australian economy.

Mr Mickel interjected.

Mr NELSON: I know that the member for Logan could not care less about people and jobs, because he does not live in a rural community where he has to see this sort of destruction, but I certainly do. If Queensland wants to reduce unemployment to 5%, then it must abandon the policies and philosophies of the past 20 or 30 years which caused the problems in the first place.

The real effects I have spoken about here tonight are those that I witness day in and day out when I drive around the many small communities in my electorate—when I have to stand there and

watch workers from Malanda Milk filing out time and time again because their jobs are slowly being eroded by things such as deregulation and the National Competition Policy, when local councils sink further and further into debt because they cannot do the work as cheaply as can some major multinational corporations. Local councils are the major employer in some of these small towns and I would like to see a situation where, even if it does cost us a little more, we protect the local councils and protect local industries and local jobs.

Mr Mickel interjected.

Mr NELSON: I do not want to put up anything. I am here to support local work and local businesses. We have to look after ourselves. Unlike the member for Logan, I support individuals and I support the idea of keeping our jobs in Australia and keeping things Australian made. I would have thought he would as well. I would have thought everyone in this House would support the concept of supporting our local areas, especially our local councils. As I said before, our local councils are the main employers in these small towns. Mareeba Shire Council is \$17m-odd in debt because it just cannot compete to make roads, put in waterworks and so on. This is what the National Competition Policy is about in reality, and I believe our motion should receive the support of this House—in full and unamended.
