



Speech by

## GORDON NUTTALL

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

Hansard 11 March 1999

### RURAL QUEENSLAND

**Mr NUTTALL** (Sandgate—ALP) (6.24 p.m.): In supporting the amendment moved this evening, I wish to focus on the Opposition's refusal to stand up for Queenslanders, both in the city and in the country, in relation to the impact of the Howard Government's unfair goods and services tax.

That the Opposition has been silent on the GST is shameless and disgraceful. On many occasions this Government has urged the Opposition to put Queensland before its coalition colleagues in Canberra in getting a fair deal. The Opposition has continued to refuse to do so. Queensland is facing a \$465m loss because the coalition here and in Canberra believe that Queensland should be denied its fair share of any distribution of GST revenue.

On 6 March, Ingham's Herbert River Express reported on the sugar industry's concerns about the GST. It stated—

"Any extra costs resulting from the GST will be borne by producers, directly impacting on the international competitiveness and profitability of the industry."

The Australian Beef Association raised its own concerns, claiming that beef prices will increase by 8.9% under the proposed GST. The banana industry has voiced significant concerns about the impact of the GST, predicting substantial losses to its growers. It is disturbing to me that the mover of the original motion, the honourable member for Crows Nest, appears to be a strong advocate of the goods and services tax. The member ignores the very serious concerns of all primary producers. It seems that the member for Crows Nest does not believe the concerns of those producers. The concerns he once voiced are not warranted any more.

This Government believes that those concerns are warranted and need to be addressed. This Government believes those concerns must be addressed—addressed for those primary producers and their families, who need to be represented. This Government believes in standing up for all Queenslanders, and in particular those in areas of primary production. This Government is lobbying the Commonwealth to avoid the imposition of a debilitating GST on rural communities.

The Opposition has refused to come to terms with the whole GST debate. Let me remind members opposite of what our Treasurer had to say on the matter. He stated—

"The Federal Government is proposing that, under the GST arrangements, crop insurance and stamp duty on crop insurance and other insurance policies would, of course, be abolished as part of that tax reform agenda. But what is not being offered is proper compensation to Queenslanders for the removal of those taxes. Furthermore, we are being asked to pay for the removal of those taxes—taxes that do not even exist in this State, but taxes that are levied interstate."

It is about time that the Opposition started to focus on the big issues, such as the GST. It is about time the Opposition started getting positive and taking a stand for this great State instead of pandering to its mates in Canberra. As the most decentralised State in this country, this Government recognises the importance of Queensland's rural and regional communities to the economic, social and cultural fabric of this great State.

Interestingly, today's Queensland Country Life contained a comment about the performance of the Primary Industries Minister, the honourable member for Inala. I will finish the quote that the honourable member for Crows Nest started.

**Mr Springborg:** What about the paragraph before that?

**Mr NUTTALL:** The honourable member for Crows Nest did not finish the quote. The Queensland Country Life article further stated—

"Primary Industries Minister Henry Palaszczuk has demonstrated a refreshing willingness to listen to rural problems—and to do something to correct them."

If the member were honest, he would have finished the quote.

I congratulate the Minister on his performance. His efforts are indicative of the work ethic and commitment to rural and regional communities of this Labor Government. It is a shame the Opposition cannot work positively and it is about time the Opposition started to lift its game. The Opposition's big problem is that it is concerned that this Government is prepared to consult, talk and listen to regional communities. It knows that the regional communities are appreciative of the work of a Labor Government. That is what is scaring the National Party.

Time expired.