



Speech by

**Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK**

**MEMBER FOR INALA**

Hansard 27 April 1999

### **GOVERNMENT ELECTION PROMISES**

**Hon. H. PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries) (6.50 p.m.): I rise to support the amendment to the motion. As the Minister for Primary Industries, I will focus on the vital role of meat safety and the strong commitment of this Government to maintain the highest meat safety standards.

Meat safety is too important to be compromised. It is too important to the meat industry and it is too important to Queensland. This Government is committed to meat safety and the quality assurance programs which were put in place by the Goss Government and which subsequently have been followed by New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia.

Unfortunately, the previous Borbidge Government neglected meat safety. Its approach to the Queensland Livestock Meat Authority, the State's meat safety regulator, was disgraceful. Independent consultants reported that the projected balance sheet for the last financial year indicated a trading loss of \$1.845m. This morning, I spoke in the House about the previous Government's refusal to fund the QLMA. It refused to fund the QLMA despite admissions by—

**Mr ROWELL:** That is absolutely incorrect. When I was the Minister, we were aware that there were some problems with the QLMA. We were carrying out an assessment because we had to make sure of the accuracy of the debt. That is what was occurring when we were in Government

**Mr SPEAKER:** That is not a point of order. The member will resume his seat.

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** I refer to a letter from the former QLMA Chairman, Richie Goldup, to the previous National Party Primary Industries Minister, the member for Hinchinbrook. In the letter dated 13 May, the day before the last Borbidge/Sheldon Budget was handed down, Mr Goldup stated—

"With respect, all members view your response as being quite unsatisfactory and are most disappointed that the position remains unresolved.

All members of the authority are most concerned as to our ongoing ability to properly discharge our duties and obligations as members of the authority."

**Mr ROWELL:** I rise to a point of order.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I would like to hear the point of order so I will have order in the House.

**Mr ROWELL:** The Minister is being very selective about one letter that was given to me when I was Primary Industries Minister.

**Mr SPEAKER:** That is not a point of order. You are debating the issue. The member will resume his seat.

**Mr ROWELL:** The assumption that the Minister is making is absolutely incorrect and I ask him to withdraw.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member finds the comments offensive. I ask the Minister to withdraw.

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** I am referring to a letter sent by the QLMA to the honourable member for Hinchinbrook.

**Mr ROWELL:** I find the remarks offensive.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I will control the House. Minister, if you are asked to withdraw, you must withdraw.

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** I will withdraw. However, the letter states further—

"The Coopers and Lybrand report identifies that the authority will be technically insolvent if certain issues as identified in such report are not resolved."

Those issues were not resolved. However, the problems of the QLMA extend back to the time when Trevor Perrett was the Minister for Primary Industries. The former Minister refused to buckle on the funding. Two days before he was sacked, Mr Perrett wrote to the QLMA. In that letter, he spoke of a meeting about QLMA's projected financial position and stated—

"In the meeting, my officers explained to you—

that is the QLMA—

"that it would be very unlikely that Queensland Treasury would fund QLMA \$0.55 million for CSO activities.

With this in mind, QLMA's expected loss for the 1997-98 financial year is \$2.25 million."

It is history that the Borbidge Government refused to meet the community service obligation. This morning in this House, I reported on the work being done by the meat safety enforcement unit established by the QLMA and funded by this Government.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** I rise to a point of order. The suggestion that we did not meet our community service obligations and that I did not is untrue. I ask that it be withdrawn.

**Mr SPEAKER:** No, that is not a point of order.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** It is offensive.

**Mr SPEAKER:** No, he did not refer to the member personally.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** The Minister referred to me by name.

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** I spoke about the Borbidge Government—not the member, the Government.

**Mr BORBIDGE:** We honoured our CSOs, and the Minister knows it.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** This month, I announced Government funding of \$800,000 for the QLMA this year alone. Also, Cabinet approved increases of up to 8% in accreditation fees in line with the CPI.

At the end of the day, this Government has done more for the meat processing industry than the previous Government ever did. If the members opposite want to compromise meat safety in Queensland, let that noose be around their necks because, at the end of the day, if we have an outbreak of salmonella in Queensland, the sale of meat will plummet and the members opposite will be directly responsible.

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