



Speech by

Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK

MEMBER FOR INALA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Wear Wool Week; Wear Wool Wednesday

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries) (10.05 a.m.), by leave: This week is Wear Wool Week and today is Wear Wool Wednesday. It commemorates the arrival of the first merino sheep to Australia 202 years ago and, importantly, it also raises the profile of Australian wool and the importance of the wool industry to Queensland. It is an employer of 9,000 people in this State.

I have written to all honourable members in this House asking them to wear wool today to help celebrate Wear Wool Wednesday, and I thank all honourable members for their support. Courtesy of the Wear Wool Week organisers, I am pleased to offer every member a wool tuft to wear as part of the celebrations. Mr Speaker, I would like to acknowledge your support for the wool industry. I note that woollen parliamentary ties are available at the Parliament House gift shop. I notice, Mr Speaker, that today you are not only wearing a wool suit but also one of the ties from the Parliament House gift shop. So if I can beg your indulgence, I congratulate you on that.

The State Government's support for the wool industry is reflected in its support for the Wear Wool Week promotions across the State. For too long, the wool industry has been hurting. The wool industry has had to contend with a devastating drought for most of this decade. It has faced intense competition in the marketplace from rival fibres, and it continues to endure depressed wool prices. Mr Speaker, I need not remind you that the Queensland wool industry has faced dark days before. The great crisis of more than a century ago left many legacies for this country. I refer particularly to Waltzing Matilda, the United Graziers Association and, of course, that great political party, the Australian Labor Party.

Mr Schwarten: Not to mention the Australian Workers Union.

Mr PALASZCZUK: And not to mention the Australian Workers Union.

The State Government and industry are working to alleviate the impacts of this prolonged depression with emphasis on sustainable production and on lowering costs. Also, we have seen greater product innovation which has ensured that the wool industry broke new ground and stimulated consumer demand. For instance, few people would know that the Australian cricket team, which I believe—and I will stick my neck out—will win the World Cup, is wearing the new sports wool.

Mr Gibbs: There is wool in the State of Origin jerseys tonight.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Wool in the State of Origin jerseys—of course.

Another innovation I will turn to briefly is the 100% woollen underwear called "wundies"—the brainchild of a Queensland woolgrower and designer, Kerrie Richards.

Government members interjected.

Mr PALASZCZUK: The last time I gave prominence to this product there was such a run on the product that Kerry Richards informed me that she sold out in both her Toowoomba store and the Brisbane store two days after I publicised the fact that woolly "wundies" are the best thing close to your body.

Mr Schwarten: I think you should model them. Table the undies.

Mr PALASZCZUK: I will not respond to such taunts at all this morning in the House.

Our generation was brought up wearing wool, but that is no longer the case. Many young Australians are not as familiar with wool, and the natural attributes of wool are often taken for granted. Sadly, research shows that Australian shorn wool production has fallen from 1,031 kilotonnes in 1989-90 to 650 kilotonnes last financial year.

Mr Veivers: What's the micron size of these things?

Mr PALASZCZUK: It is a telling statistic when you take into account that for every dollar earned by the wool industry, 90c flows on to production in other industries and an additional 36c of household income in Queensland. For every additional million dollars earned by the wool industry, 30 additional jobs are created. It is for all these reasons and many more that Wear Wool Week and Wear Wool Wednesday are so critical.

And in response to the honourable member for Southport's interjection about the microns in this tuft of wool—I have spoken to the honourable member for Gregory who is well known throughout Queensland and this Parliament for his sartorial elegance, and he informs me that the micron value of these tufts of wool is 21 microns.
