



Speech by

Hon. J. ELDER

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

Hansard 15 September 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Meat Processing Industry, Toowoomba

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (9.42 a.m.), by leave: I rise to inform the House about the future of the meat processing industry in the Toowoomba and Darling Downs region. Ever since the previous Government announced in October 1997 that the Government would exit the ownership of the Queensland Abattoir Corporation there has been a great deal of doubt over the future of the QAC's facilities. At Toowoomba, about 86 workers have been waiting for any word on their future so that they can plan ahead and get on with their lives.

Today, I am announcing that the QAC abattoir at Toowoomba will be closing by the end of this month. However, this Government has put in place other arrangements which will actually increase the number of people working in the industry both in Toowoomba and on the Darling Downs.

Of the 86 people working at the Toowoomba abattoir, about 25 are in the employment of Listyard, which operates a boning room on the site. The Government has negotiated with Listyard to transfer its kill to Wallangarra on the southern part of the Darling Downs, and within six months the company proposes to establish a boning room at Wallangarra as well. In the short term, this work will be undertaken at the company's Brisbane premises. Some employees will be offered jobs at the new location, as well as assistance in moving if they so desire.

However, I can also announce some developments within Toowoomba itself which will have a positive impact on employment. Listyard will build a brand new abattoir for the slaughter of goats and lambs on the Charlton industrial estate on the western outskirts of Toowoomba. This facility will be completed within two years and will employ 100 people. It will also be an export-standard abattoir with full European Community accreditation. In addition, the land currently occupied by QAC in Toowoomba will be made available for industrial purposes. There has already been substantial commercial interest in this site, which has the potential to create many more jobs in Toowoomba.

In summary, what this does is give a future to the meat processing industry on the Darling Downs and a long-term future for the workers in the Toowoomba facility. I recognise that there will be some short-term pain as the new arrangements are put in place, but the end result is a viable industry and more long-term sustainable jobs. I commend the work of the Minister for Primary Industries, Henry Palaszczuk, and the meat industry task force, which has shown a willingness to work with the private sector to identify new opportunities for business in this State and create more jobs for Queenslanders.
