



Speech by

Hon. J. ELDER

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

Hansard 10 November 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Berri Limited

Hon. J. P. ELDER (Capalaba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development and Minister for Trade) (9.40 a.m.), by leave: The Beattie Government continues to assist companies trying to build industries in this State which lead to further employment opportunities. While many of our public efforts have focused on new technology, we are also aware of the fact that Queensland is blessed with great natural advantages, so we are alive to prospects which involve using new technology in concert with our natural resources.

In light of this, I am pleased to be able to tell the House that later today I will officiate at the Queensland launch of Berri Ltd's Gourmet Garden range of products. This Government played an active role in securing this new range of products, which is storming Australian kitchens and which will bring a further 40 full-time equivalent jobs to the State. As importantly, these jobs will be created in an area of high unemployment—the Sunshine Coast hinterland or, more specifically, in the town of Palmwoods.

Berri, through its Sunshine Coast based subsidiary Tropico Fruits, will invest \$5m over the next three years to help create new jobs not just at Palmwoods but also through the State as a whole new industry develops. Once again we see smart industries coming to the Smart State.

The Gourmet Garden products are a completely new innovation in delivery of herbs and spices, using revolutionary proprietary technology. The range is made from freshly chopped herbs preserved without the use of heat, thus maintaining the herbs' true colour, flavour, aroma and texture. The initial range of 12 herbs includes basil, garlic, chives, mint, parsley, oregano, rosemary, lemon grass, coriander, chilli, ginger and green onion. The product lasts for 60 days under refrigeration.

There is another very important leg to this deal, that is, the supply of raw materials. Tropico has estimated that it will source 80% of raw materials—fresh herbs and spices—from Queensland. This will have an enormous flow-on benefit to the State as a whole new industry—the production of herbs—is established. It is a new industry and it will benefit all of the State.

The key to the project's success has been finding a natural way to deliver the delicate qualities of fresh tasting herbs and spices. The products are prepared using a tightly regulated schedule of harvesting, chopping, blending and packaging within a minimal amount of time to ensure optimum freshness.

This significant Australian technology has been in development for almost a decade. This Government is pleased to play a part in ensuring that it remains here in Australia. For too long, Australian technology has been harvested by offshore companies. This example by the Berri group is destined to not only stay at home but also offer enormous export opportunities. In short, this is the Smart State meeting our raw materials—our good climate, soils, rainfall and industry. It is a development this Government will not only watch with interest but also feel some pride in as Berri's new products are discovered by the cooks of the world.
