



Speech by

Mr LEN STEPHAN

MEMBER FOR GYMPIE

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PRIMARY INDUSTRIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie—NPA) (12.45 p.m.): I take this opportunity to bring to the attention of the House a couple of issues that really do not get very much airplay. One of these is the fruit and vegetable industry, on which basically every person in this place relies very heavily indeed. The amount of transportation of fruit and vegetables around the countryside is enormous. Not long ago, receiving any produce from the Northern Territory, for example, was a rare event. Nowadays, enormous amounts of produce come from areas such as that. As well, those products are being transported in such a way that each and every one of us is able to enjoy those fruits and vegetables with great relish.

Mr Sullivan: I don't mind relish.

Mr STEPHAN: The member might be thinking about a different sort of relish. We can all get a lot of enjoyment from the fruits and vegetables that are put on our tables from time to time. I will come back to that aspect shortly.

Water is another issue of great importance. I am concerned that the Government has decided not to construct any further dams in the near future. If we cannot maintain the water requirements of this State, we will not be able to sustain our fruit and vegetable industry and, consequently, life itself. That is very important, because those two things go hand in hand. For example, in my electorate of Gympie, a cap has been placed on the Borumba dam. However, that will not be very successful if other dams are not built to help maintain our water requirements.

Mr Malone: What about jobs?

Mr STEPHAN: Jobs go hand in hand with building a dam. But this also affects jobs in the fruit and vegetable industry, the dairy cattle industry and many other industries. We must keep our feet on the ground and ensure that what we are doing is not only for this generation but for future generations.

I hope that in his reply the Minister refers to the relationship between primary industries and the marketplace. We cannot have one without the other. If we bring in produce from other parts of the world, we will do ourselves a disservice and we will undermine our primary industries.

At times, the vegetable industry takes part in marketing campaigns, such as explaining to people the disadvantages in not eating vegetables every day and instead banking on eating them only once or twice a week. That marketing campaign asked people, "Are you getting enough?" Another marketing campaign was in relation to the just-in-time mentality.

Mr Pearce interjected.

Mr STEPHAN: The member is referring to the dairy industry. It also asks, "Are you getting enough?" Members can draw their own conclusions as to the strategies that the industry is adopting.

Mr Palaszczuk: What are you talking about? Can you be more specific? I just can't seem to get what you are talking about.

Mr STEPHAN: I am trying to say that the marketing programs also ensure that we have quality produce, which starts with the growers, then goes to the transport industry and finishes with the retailers.

Mr Palaszczuk: You are after the integrity of the supply chain.

Mr STEPHAN: Yes, that is right. It is a far larger process than a lot of people realise. I am not trying to be funny or trying to be difficult, it is just that a lot of times we think that the structures are put in place and that they will be there when they are required. If we do not ensure that those structures are in place, we will be going down the wrong track.

We have to make sure that there are sufficient funds for the industry to undertake cutting edge research, such as the programs that are under way to improve market access through the development of new disinfestation technologies for citrus fruit and the heat disinfestation of mangoes before they are exported to Japan. Our other export markets include China and other countries to our north, including the potential to export to countries such as the ones to which we are going to send troops.

Representatives of the Queensland Fruit and Vegetable Growers are also going overseas not only to spread their knowledge but also bring back new ideas. By going overseas, those producers get to know the types of vegetables that people from overseas are eating and the types of vegetables that they are actively looking for. Noel Harvey has assisted with the Asian vegetable workshops to help growers determine their research and development and chemical registration needs for the fruit and vegetables that will be exported to Asian markets. Noel Harvey has also conducted interviews and met with wholesalers, retailers and research agencies in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne to report on industry development projects and initiatives. Representatives from the Queensland Fruit and Vegetable Growers have also conducted study tours to Hong Kong and China. Such study tours make a tremendous difference for our exporters, because through them they get to know what the consumers in those markets are looking for. Noel Harvey presented a series of slides and information to Queensland Fruit and Vegetable Growers staff and delegates on the recent study tour to Hong Kong and China.

I congratulate the industry on those initiatives, because through them they have gained the respect of the people to whom they are sending their products. They have also come back with information that will enable them to make sure that they are exporting the products that the consumers want to eat, not what they think the consumers should be eating. The fruit and vegetable industry is a very large industry. For a long time, we have been relying upon the expertise of the people involved in the industry in south-east Queensland, because they are much closer to the market than growers in north Queensland or the Northern Territory. However, each area is certainly making a big impact in the industry. For example, at the moment, we have an all-your-round program to send beans to Sydney and Melbourne. I am just not too sure what the arrangements are for the export of watermelons, but currently producers are growing them throughout the year. I thank the House for giving me the opportunity to make these few comments.
