



Speech by

**Hon. RUSSELL COOPER**

**MEMBER FOR CROWS NEST**

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Hansard 10 June 1999

### **DAIRY INDUSTRY DEREGULATION**

**Hon. T. R. COOPER** (Crows Nest—NPA) (10.26 a.m.): Despite the retention of the farm gate price and supply management scheme in Queensland, dairy farmers remain deeply uncertain. Much of the industry's future now hinges on whether or not the Victorian dairy industry decides to deregulate. If it does deregulate, the sheer size of that industry and the aggressive nature of the major processors and retailers will drive down the price of milk that the farmers receive. As we know, the benefits of any price rises within the milk industry go to the processors and the retailers—the consumers pay and the dairy farmers get nothing. Deregulation does not work.

In the event of deregulation, the Australian Dairy Farmers Federation, led by Pat Rowley, has proposed a \$1 billion, five year restructuring package. The Queensland coalition has supported that package, but only as a last resort. It is essential that the State Government takes the fight to the Victorians and tries to prevent deregulation of the dairy industry in that State and the expected domino effect that would result.

Deregulation in the processing and retailing sectors has seen price increases, but if the farm sector is also deregulated the price that farmers receive will inevitably drop. If deregulation proceeds, in the first instance Queensland farmers would be entitled to some five years to adjust to the new market environment, which is what the processors, distributors and retailers were given. Farmers should also be entitled to the restructuring package. Dairy farmers have restructured their industry before in the public interest and they deserve our support if they are forced to restructure and go through the resultant upheaval again.

**Government members** interjected.

The \$1 billion restructuring package should be non-negotiable. I call on the Beattie Government to show bipartisan support for it. Obviously from the interjections from across the Chamber, members opposite do not support the dairy farmers or their restructure—

**Mr HAMILL:** I rise to a point of order. We are very supportive of the dairy industry. It is about time that the coalition lobbied its mates in Victoria if it is worried about the dairy industry in that State. After all, they govern that State.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr Cooper:** What Standing Order does that come under?

**Mr SPEAKER:** I have just said that there is no point of order.

**Mr Cooper:** We know that.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Does the member wish to move a motion of dissent from that ruling?

**Mr Cooper:** Not this time.

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