



Speech by

**Hon. RUSSELL COOPER**

**MEMBER FOR CROWS NEST**

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Hansard 22 July 1999

### **CATTLE DIPPING FEES**

**Hon. T. R. COOPER** (Crows Nest—NPA) (7.08 p.m.): Under a fee structure announced by the DPI, cattlemen across the State will pay a \$30 call-out fee, \$1 a head for up to 100 cattle and thereafter 50 cents per head of cattle to have cattle dipped for ticks on the weekend. The introduction of these fees follows a move to restrict weekend cattle dipping to essential stocks, such as live cattle export, which was aimed at limiting the accumulation of time off in lieu by stock inspectors. This was done with little to no consultation.

The maintenance of the tick line is most important to those living in tick-free areas, yet the proposed cost for dipping is to be met solely by those cattlemen who, through no fault of their own, are unfortunate enough to have cattle with ticks. Stock inspectors want overtime for working weekends instead of time off in lieu. The Government wants to levy a charge to pay for weekend work.

The method of payment is something for the department to resolve internally. However, at a place such as Cloncurry where there are four stock inspectors, there should be a roster system. People in industries such as the tourism industry work a five-day week, but any five days, as do all people involved in the livestock world—transport operators, helicopter musterers, contractors and indeed property owners. The DPI must adapt to that.

In the northern areas, the numbers are very light in the summer months, which is the wet season, except for clearing dips for stock destined for live export—a most important and productive side of things. Those dips are located at Cloncurry, Mount Isa and Charters Towers. If all the overtime had to be paid, from a budget of over \$300m or more, I believe it could be found.

Surely the primary role of the department should be to maintain animal and plant health in this State and most other activities should come later. We see all sorts of extension services. Lots of farm and financial advisers hold all sorts of conferences and field days, and they seem to have little trouble finding funding for travel and ancillary expenses. Surely stock inspectors should rate more highly. I draw attention to this fact, because a lot of people, who often form a minority, now have to foot an enormous bill for the sake of others, but also stock inspectors should be able to continue—

Time expired.

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