



Speech by

Hon. RUSSELL COOPER

MEMBER FOR CROWS NEST

Hansard 28 October 1999

MEAT PROCESSING

Hon. T. R. COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (10.15 a.m.): The meat industry is one of the most important industries in this State and, as such, the coalition supports efforts to assist the industry in adjusting to changing and very difficult market conditions. But the Beattie Government has repeatedly evaded disclosure of the assistance provided to certain meat processing companies in this State, unless it has been politically convenient to do so.

In this House the Premier boasted of the assistance offered to ConAgra to expand its AMH Dinmore operation, but no details of that assistance have been provided. In reply to a question on 19 August, the Deputy Premier claimed that the Beattie Government had given no assistance to meat processors under the Major Projects Incentive Scheme or the Queensland Investment Incentive Scheme. He then disclosed that Darling Downs Bacon, Western Exporters and Southern Queensland Exporters had been given assistance under the meat processing development initiative, and rightly so. But the Deputy Premier then hid behind commercial in confidence and refused to disclose further details of Government assistance to meat processors.

In reply to another question, the Transport Minister disclosed that Queensland Rail, an arm of Government, was building a \$5.85m livestock unloading facility at AMH at Dinmore. In reply to another question regarding assistance offered to AMH Dinmore's meatworks, the Premier implied that assistance had been offered when he said that the Dinmore works was able to demonstrate that it had a sound and exciting business plan.

The Premier and his Labor Government have been evasive, far from open and accountable and less than honest on this issue. I call on the Beattie Government to restore some credibility to the process and throw open the books to disclose exactly how much assistance has been offered to each abattoir under each assistance program. There should be nothing to hide. We on this side of the House advocate sensible support for the meat industry, but it must be fair. It must be equitable for all participants in the meat industry and not just provided to one favourite son.
