



Speech by

Mr BRUCE LAMING

MEMBER FOR MOOLOOLAH

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ACCESS QUEENSLAND PTY LTD

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (6.53 p.m.): We have unemployment in Queensland seemingly locked at the rate of about 8% and our primary industries in particular and the areas that depend upon them are facing huge challenges as we move into the new millennium. Yet on the other hand, Queensland is producing great primary products and has the ability to extend this production when new markets, particularly overseas, are developed. We have tremendous expertise among our primary producers which, with a little assistance, can create wealth and jobs for those in our regions whose livelihoods depend on these industries.

I am advised that the market for imported seafood into London is \$3 billion per annum; fruit, \$4 billion; vegetables, \$3 billion; and flowers, \$3 billion. Currently, Queensland's share of that market is negligible. I believe that the Government's role is to take whatever reasonable action is necessary to help promote our produce in places such as London. This will dramatically expand exports from Queensland, profits for Queensland businesses and jobs for Queenslanders. This can be achieved by a cooperative approach between producers and Governments, together with a measure of financial assistance from Governments.

Such a company does exist in Queensland, and it is called Access Queensland Pty Ltd. Access Queensland is a Queensland company formed to promote the export of particularly Queensland produce direct into London. I will advise the House what that company has done already using its own resources: visited leading hotels and major stores on three occasions with product from Queensland and discussed their long-term usage in the market; ascertained that provided a competent and reliable supply system is established, products from Queensland will be highly sought after in the London market; provided more than 1,000 kilograms of air-freighted produce to the Savoy, Hyatt, Dorchester, Ritz, Four Seasons and Marriott Hotel groups, as well as supplying the Waitrose Group, which has 127 department stores in the United Kingdom; and provided seafood, many varieties of fruit, vegetables and flowers, all of which arrived in first-class order and which were widely acclaimed by hotels and department stores.

One of the problems that Access Queensland has identified is that this clientele is very, very sophisticated and prefers to deal only with suppliers who have impeccable bona fides. Therefore, it is essential that any company hoping to set up such a supply chain for Queensland's primary producers possesses appropriate premises from which this type of business can be conducted. Access Queensland advised the Queensland Government of its desire to enter the European market through establishing an outlet at Queensland House in London. The best offer from the Premier was the use of some space in the building for approximately four weeks. Unfortunately, in a commercial sense, that was impractical.

In March this year, Paul McNamara, the Managing Director of Access Queensland, wrote to the Premier requesting urgent consideration of financial assistance prior to his most recent visit to London. This request, which I supported, has not yet been acknowledged. This great opportunity for Queensland industries, Queensland regions and Queensland jobs is at risk of withering on the vine. The Government has helped the English company, Virgin, and rightly so. The Government has also helped the Irish Kerry Group, and rightly so. Access Queensland is a Queensland company that deserves an even greater consideration, and very rightly so.

Since Access Queensland had to abandon the prospect of Queensland House as a site to promote Queensland produce, it has had to look at alternative methods of establishing itself in the

London hotel market. It has completed two trial shipments of products, one in February and one in May of this year. Each shipment was of more than 600 kilograms, which successfully tested the effectiveness of the freight forwarding systems at Heathrow Airport. It convinced the company that they must establish their own centre. They simply cannot expect their product to be set aside for them at Heathrow. However, they can move it quickly and break it up at their own centre.

They have now found a site at Chelsea, which will allow them to establish a distribution centre and showcase Queensland produce to the leading hotels. Once established, Access Queensland will be able to establish an e-commerce ordering and delivery service to supply fresh products on a daily basis to hotel groups. They estimate the cost of establishing this outlet with coldrooms, freezers, chillers and display units at \$600,000. Access Queensland has put in place high-quality standards that can say confidently that such products will be accepted eagerly by London's leading hotels. Marriott Hotels agreed to accept their seafood and flowers for assessment at the Grosvenor Square Marriott and they have advised verbally that their products were very well received. They need to establish this centre to a standard that will be capable of welcoming the chefs of London's leading hotels to visit their establishments so that they can sample the produce of Queensland. All they seek is the consideration of an interest-free loan, not a grant, from the Queensland Government to establish the centre. They estimate that more than 100 jobs will be created in Queensland over 12 months if the project proceeds.

If support is not forthcoming, it really questions this Government's commitment to real opportunities in the market. This opportunity to develop Queensland's established assets deserves our support. I call on the Premier to personally intervene and urgently assess what assistance can be provided to Access Queensland so that its aims, which are the aims and aspirations of so many ordinary Queenslanders, can be realised.
