



Speech by

Mr M. ROWELL

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard 23 August 2000

DAIRY INDUSTRY

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (10.18 a.m.): I wish to draw attention to a renewed threat facing dairy farmers and call upon the Minister for Primary Industries to urgently act on their behalf. Although deregulation has dominated the dairy industry, worsening drought conditions in much of south-east Queensland are looming as the final straw for many farmers. The worsening conditions are located in a band stretching from Warwick in the Fassifern Valley through to the Darling Downs and up into the South Burnett and are affecting all industries. The impact is harshest on dairy farmers who are battling to maintain production in the face of vicious cuts to their milk prices as a result of deregulation.

The rainfall over the past six to 12 months has been well below average and what pasture remains is of little nutritional value. Grain prices are on the rise as dry conditions and winter crops fail. Molasses shortages are looming as a result of the poor sugar harvest. Freight costs are soaring. These adverse conditions will finish many of the farmers if they do not receive urgent assistance. The drought relief scheme currently available fails to take into account the unique situation facing dairy farmers and should be adjusted immediately to allow dairy farmers to access the scheme. These dairy farmers must feed their cows to maintain their production and should receive special consideration for freight rebates.

I also call on the Minister to consider the introduction of a special low-interest loan scheme within the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority for immediate support. The Beattie Government has offered only token assistance to dairy farmers trying to survive deregulation. It is now time for the Minister to do something constructive.

Time expired.
