



Speech by

**PAUL LUCAS MLA**

**MEMBER FOR LYTTON**

---

Hansard 16 May 2000

### **PRODUCT LABELLING**

**Mr LUCAS** (Lytton—ALP) (6.17 p.m.): I rise to support the concept behind the motion to encourage the Federal Government to require Australian content percentage labelling. I note the recent AusBuy campaign from Dick Smith and its very admirable intentions to support Australian owned companies. Of course, it is the best possible situation if we can have not just Australian workers manufacturing products but Australian owned companies employing those workers so those profits can be spent locally.

We just cannot leave it at that, because Australia is a trading based country. We depend upon foreign investment to create and promote jobs in this country. Projects such as Korea Zinc, the Gladstone smelter and Virgin Australia are all examples of foreign owned enterprises that are creating jobs in this country. I notice that the member for Gladstone will be speaking in this debate later. There are many people in her electorate who are employed by companies that have a significant proportion of foreign ownership. What is important, though, is that they are employing Queensland workers.

I know that the Minister for State Development has been incredibly active in his efforts to get these projects sourced in this country so we do have Australian workers doing these jobs. As I said, in an ideal world we would have our own indigenous zinc companies, we would have our own refining capacity—and one day we will have that with the growth of our economy. But the fact is that we are a trading based economy, and we need to understand that. We also need to understand that often even if businesses are not Australian owned they employ Australian workers and that is also good for our country.

One of the great advantages of Australia as a manufacturing venue, whether it be for local companies or foreign owned companies, is our very importantly placed geographical position in the world. We are very close to Asia and make a very good and stable investment platform for Australian companies to manufacture goods and sell into that market. We also have a highly skilled and educated work force. We have stringent health standards and environmental standards that all go to making us a very attractive venue for local and foreign ownership.

Not only are Australians working on these projects; local construction companies are involved as well. I commend the Beattie Labor Government on its local industry policy. This has been the subject of much debate in the House before. However, I note two important parts of it: all Government owned corporations are requested to report annually on levels of local industry projects undertaken and prepare an industry participation plan for projects in excess of \$5m and there must be support for local industry to promote innovation, flexibility and best practice and integration of the approach with the proposed Statewide Purchasing Policy. This Government has been very serious about what it does in terms of promoting Australian purchases and promoting Australian workers and industry.

I am indebted to a Federal Labor colleague, the member for Wills, Kelvin Thomson. He noted in a speech to the Federal Parliament last year some of the actions of the Federal Howard Government in cutting some \$2m from the Advance Australia Foundation. That is quite disgraceful. That action by the Federal Government caused that foundation to go into liquidation. Over the 12 years of that foundation, it created some 9,200 jobs with its campaigns and added some \$360m to GDP. I would also like to compliment Dick Smith on his AusBuy campaign. As I said before, it is important that we have Australian-owned companies. The best situation of all is to have Australian-owned companies. If

we can do that, that is fantastic. In fact, this morning my children were eating toast that had Dick Smith's peanut paste on it. I remember it because they did not put the lid on the jar and I had to do it before putting it back in the fridge. I am not a peanut paste person, but—

**Mrs Lavarch** interjected.

**Mr LUCAS:** No, I have them well trained. They make the toast.

Promoting Australian-made and Australian-owned products makes good economic sense. It is known that some 70% of consumers look for information about a product's origin and some 88% say that they prefer to buy Australian whenever possible. According to information from the Australian Made campaign, after nutritional information, use-by dates and ingredients, it is the next thing that consumers look for when making their purchasing decisions. So it is a very important project. Vegemite, Bundaberg Rum and Foureux are not Australian owned any more. That is the cause of some regret. However, the fact remains that when people drink a Foureux or a Bundaberg Rum or put Vegemite on their toast, they know that it is Australian workers who make it. That is very important as well.

---