



Speech by

Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK

MEMBER FOR INALA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Pork Industry

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (10.04 a.m.), by leave: Three and a half years ago the Australian pork industry was in crisis. The downward pressure on prices following the decision to provide greater access for pig meat imports from Canada and Denmark was very severe. There were some people who predicted the Australian pork industry was doomed, paying the price for its predominant focus on the domestic market. But this government put in place a number of measures, including support for local processors, to develop the export focus of the state's pork industry and build on the industry's reputation as a quality, clean and safe producer. So when the outbreak of Nipah virus occurred in Malaysia in the late 1990s, the Queensland industry was well positioned to serve overseas markets such as Singapore.

In 1996-97, 600 tonnes of Queensland pig meat was exported. In 2000-01, that figure had grown to 7,800 tonnes. The fact is there is even greater export potential for the Australian pork industry. Earlier this year I led a trade mission to Japan and Taiwan, and there are very good opportunities for increased trade. The comparatively small production base in Queensland has meant that our ability to service major markets such as Japan has been limited. There is the potential to treble the state's pork production.

The Queensland pork industry is undergoing a major expansion. In 1999-2000, the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated the state's pig herd to be 554,000. According to the DPI, approvals for piggeries above 5,000 standard pig units alone in the last 12 months have included 50,000 standard pig units in new piggeries and 126,000 standard pig units in existing piggery expansions. In addition, a further 120,000 standard pig units are under assessment in the form of new piggery and expansion applications. The standard pig units approved by DPI for larger piggeries alone provide a 30 per cent increase on the 1999-2000 figures. There has also been significant growth in smaller piggeries.

The new investment in the pork industry through the establishment of additional piggeries and increased processing capacity has provided and will continue to provide further economic and employment opportunities. The state government's Queensland Pig Industry Development Strategy, aimed at supporting significant and competitive industry expansion, is assisting this. The DPI in particular has given a lot of attention to efforts to streamline the process for assessment of applications, the criteria for approvals and the conditions attaching to those approvals. The DPI has allocated more funding and additional staff to the new Intensive Livestock Systems Unit. Now almost four years later, after a severe crisis, we have a far more confident and export-focused industry readying itself for the festive season and the traditional peak in demand for pork and Christmas hams.
