



Speech by

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LOTUS GLEN FIELD DAYS

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (11.13 p.m.): Tonight I bring to the attention of the House an event in the Tablelands electorate which highlights the resourcefulness and enterprise of country people and their willingness to face up to troubled times. I refer to the recent Lotus Glen field days staged as a joint effort by the Rotary clubs of Atherton and Mareeba. Farming, industrial and commercial exhibits on display were worth many millions of dollars. In all, there were 215 stands and stalls. This was 10 down on the previous field day two years ago. However, taking into account the downturn in the rural economy in that time, it was a fine result. It also demonstrated an unwavering determination by country people to face the future despite everything this government seems to throw at them to force them off their farms and out of their rural lifestyle.

The confidence shown at the field day was an indictment of this government's policies of deregulation and the systematic heaping of setback upon setback on the people of rural and regional Queensland. Despite the hard times, an estimated 10,000 people came along from many parts of Queensland to see the two-day event, creating an economic flow-on to the hospitality industry, petrol stations, business houses and shops in the two towns and surrounding areas. This all goes to show that country people have the get-up-and-go that this state and nation are desperately seeking. If they are to survive and flourish, Queenslanders need the encouragement and backing of their state government. They need people with foresight who can appreciate the value of the regional riches of this vast state and who are prepared to fund progress in the regional areas—not self-styled country boys with their short-sighted preoccupation with the needs of the south-east corner.

They need people with vision to halt deregulation before it kills off all our rural industries and depopulates our country towns. It needs people capable of rethinking the policies of globalisation that have been foisted upon them—policies which force our farmers who get little government backing to compete on what is an unlevel playing field against foreign farmers, some of whom are given strong financial incentives by their governments. This inequality is forcing farmers out of their industries because they can no longer compete against imports—imports produced by cheap foreign labour that effectively takes away jobs for our own young people. It must be clearly evident, even to a government as myopic as this Labor government headed by Peter Beattie, that once lost to this state and this nation our rural economy will face a long and hard road back to prosperity.
