



Speech by

**Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK**

**MEMBER FOR INALA**

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Hansard 18 September 2002

### **PRIMARY INDUSTRIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Hon. H. PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (9.54 p.m.), in reply: At the outset, I want to thank all honourable members who contributed to the debate this evening. Whenever primary industries legislation is introduced into this House it certainly stirs up emotions on both sides of the House. It is always good for me as minister to be able to bring into this House what we call a PILA bill, which is an omnibus bill which amends a number of bills that need amending through the primary industries sector. I can assure the honourable member for Nicklin that his contribution certainly made me remember what this PILA bill is all about.

Whilst many of the amendments are not significant, they are very important for our primary industries sector. As I have been reminded by all members in this House during this debate, this bill amends 10 pieces of legislation. I would like to go through all honourable members' contributions, but I must admit that quite a few members on both sides of the House certainly drew the longbow and introduced issues that do not really pertain to this bill. As minister, I can assure all honourable members that I listened to what they had to say. Whilst I will not comment on what they said, I certainly have taken on board their comments and I thank them all for their contributions.

I turn now to some of the specifics mentioned by the honourable member for Hinchinbrook in his contribution. In the first instance, I thank him for his support of the legislation. Quite obviously, he and other members of the opposition and Independent members and members of the One Nation Party took advantage of briefings prepared for them by officers of the Department of Primary Industries and Mike Tandy from my office. I am quite sure that they appreciated those briefings and that they made them more aware of the content of the amendments than they would otherwise have been.

Let me first refer to some of the issues raised by the honourable member for Hinchinbrook. The honourable member is concerned that the Food Production (Safety) Act goes overboard in applying to industries other than meat and dairy. I want to put the member's mind at rest that food safety schemes for other industries would only be made if a risk assessment proves that there is a need for one and only after there is full industry consultation. The only other industries for which other schemes are currently being considered are for fish and eggs. I believe, however, that should a risk ever be found, for example, in vegetables the government needs to be in a position to act promptly. The Food Production (Safety) Act will provide that safeguard. It is of course important that the highest standards be maintained by industries in today's competitive market.

The member for Hinchinbrook also inquired as to the process of transition of meat and dairy arrangements to Safe Food Production Queensland. The process of developing new food safety schemes for meat and dairy is progressing in accordance with the requirements of the Food Production (Safety) Act 2000. The act requires a very detailed process of consultation with industry, and that is fully in accordance with the government's policies on these matters. Safe Food Production Queensland has set up food safety advisory subcommittees under the act to bring together all sectors of the two industries. The two subcommittees have worked with Safe Food Production Queensland, with Queensland Health and also the DPI to develop the actual food safety scheme proposals. It really has been a collaborative effort. There is no doubt that Queensland will have the most comprehensive new food safety arrangements for meat and dairy products anywhere in this country. Once again

Queensland is leading the other states. Because in a legal and technical sense food safety schemes have to be made as subordinate legislation, it is necessary for a regulatory impact statement to be developed and put out for a period of public consultation before new schemes are formally made as regulations. Ultimately the new meat and dairy food safety schemes are intended to be promulgated as regulations, and the current expected operative date is 1 January 2003.

The member for Gladstone expressed some concern about the need for careful application of the precautionary principle in the fisheries amendments, and the key principle of ecologically sustainable development—ESD for short—is being adopted as the precautionary principle. This principle incorporates the approach that if there is a threat of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of scientific certainty should not be used as a reason to postpone measures to prevent environmental degradation. I am quite sure all members on both sides of the House would agree with that. It is important to note the use of the words 'serious and irreversible'. These words limit the situations where fisheries sustainability concerns may override other factors such as economic or social considerations.

The member for Gladstone also raised some queries in relation to the amendments about fisheries statistical returns. In a number of instances the specific fishers required to comply with logbook return requirements cannot be identified. An example would be commercial fishers who target or take a particular species of fish; although all commercial fishers may be authorised to take that species, only a specific number of fishers would need to be notified of the requirement. It is proposed that the chief executive will be able to specify requirements about the keeping and giving of statistical returns in such circumstances under subordinate legislation. This amendment therefore only provides an appropriate head of power for requirements regarding logbooks to be introduced, and it is very much mechanical in nature.

The honourable member for Mirani raised the need for a commonsense approach by police and inspectors in deciding whether to seize drought-affected animals. I assure the honourable member that under the Animal Care and Protection Act seizure is very much a last resort. The major emphasis of the act is on raising awareness and working with the owners of animals through the use of animal welfare directions. Only if these measures fail would seizure be considered. The predicament that drought causes farmers is fully understood. That issue was also raised by the honourable member for Gregory. However, I am confident that there is sufficient flexibility in the act to assist people trying to do the right thing in difficult circumstances.

There were a number of other speakers on the bill. I note with interest the contributions made by the honourable member for Kurwongbah who, of course, is the chair of the Fisheries Industry Development Council.

**A government member:** And a great chair she is too!

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** I will accept that interjection from whomever it was. I am glad it was not the honourable member for Kurwongbah! I must say that as the chair of the FIDC, as it is affectionately called, the honourable member for Kurwongbah is doing a wonderful job. She certainly gets on extremely well with all the members of her committee and she is commended for the wonderful work she is doing there.

I will also mention the honourable member for Logan. He certainly has a passion for primary industries, and he spoke a little bit away from the contents of the bill. However, his passion was certainly forthcoming in the way he portrayed the great successes of the pork industry and how important it is for us to value add and how important our Smart State process is in ensuring that we are able to be competitive in that ugly market overseas with our value added products.

A number of members, including the honourable member for Kurwongbah and the honourable member for Darling Downs, who is not here, spoke about dairy deregulation. Let me say a couple of things about dairy deregulation. Honourable members on the opposite side would understand the dreadful time we went through from the 1998 election through to the 2001 election when we had to implement dairy deregulation that was forced upon us by the federal government. The thing about dairy deregulation is this: the federal government imposed a 11c per litre levy on all consumers in Australia to assist our dairy farmers overcome the problems that deregulation brought. Some \$1.8 billion is to be raised over the next eight years and it is money that will be very well spent to assist our dairy farmers. However, primary industry is based on success, and when I was up in Toowoomba just recently—yesterday, as a matter of fact—I was able to launch an animal welfare code for the dairy industry. While I was there, what do you think I discovered? Our dairy farmers on the Darling Downs are looking at a 25 per cent increase in production and they are looking at increased prices for their milk. They are looking forward; they are not looking back. That story is being replicated in all the different dairying areas of Queensland. In the Atherton Tableland wonderful work is being done with the support of the state government. In the Dayboro area and the Warwick area similar things are happening. In Gympie and Nambour it is all happening. I am very pleased that after all these difficult times our dairy farmers have had to go through, things are slowly beginning to look up for them.

Finally, I will mention the contribution made by the honourable member for Toowoomba North. The honourable member for Toowoomba North is a very perceptive member. He mentioned quite a number of things about the Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities with which I totally concur. He also announced that I will be attending the Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers. Honourable members must understand that among the cabinet members that is the most sought-after engagement.

I will be honest with you, Madam Deputy Speaker; last year I was there at the opening, but the Minister for Tourism and Racing did the official opening and I sat by watching. But this year I am proud to announce that I have been officially invited to do the opening myself. I already have a wager with a radio announcer from radio station 4WK—we took the wager yesterday—that my floral outfit will outdo his floral outfit on the day of the opening of the Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers. The mayor there insists that any invited guest has to come dressed in some form of floral clothing. I will not tell honourable members what I am going to wear—it is a surprise—but I am quite sure that people attending the Carnival of Flowers will be more than suitably impressed.

With those few words I thank all honourable members for their contribution.

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mr PALASZCZUK:** I feel very sad listening to that comment by the honourable member opposite. With those few words I will resume my seat and thank honourable members for their contributions.

Motion agreed to.

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