



Speech by

Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard 27 November 2002

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Drought Hotline

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (10.08 a.m.): Earlier this month I met with representatives of farm organisations as part of the Drought Industry Working Group. One of the recommendations from industry was the establishment of a national hotline to assist primary producers to obtain information about the support available. I agreed with this proposal, but I was concerned that a national hotline might mean that Queensland farmers would be calling Perth, Hobart or Canberra. Therefore, I undertook to establish a dedicated Queensland drought hotline through the Department of Primary Industries. While the DPI has its own call centre, I agreed with industry that a dedicated freecall line for drought-affected primary producers was needed.

I can advise the House that the DPI drought hotline is now operational. The hotline number is 1800 025 656. It will operate Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., excluding public holidays. Staffed by DPI officers, the hotline will provide the latest information on financial assistance, social, community and training services, drought planning, and management support and advice. Hotline staff will advise callers on financial assistance, including freight subsidies such as those provided under the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme, registrations and road train permits for vehicles used in drought relief, school transport allowances, electricity tariff relief, land rents and stock route fees, and Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority loans for producers recovering from drought. The hotline will also connect people to social and community services that can provide advice about personal and family concerns including depression, domestic violence and women's health. Weekly climate outlooks are also available on the hotline.

The hotline will also provide details on DPI workshops about how to interpret and utilise climate and weather forecasts and an electronic trading site for producers and suppliers seeking to buy or sell stockfeed. Producers will be able to contact DPI farm financial counsellors and access information on property management and how to negotiate with banks and other financial institutions through the hotline.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before calling the Minister for Natural Resources, I ask honourable members to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of a delegation of senior public servants from Sri Lanka being hosted by the University of Southern Queensland.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!
