



Speech by

CHRIS FOLEY

Member for MARYBOROUGH

Hansard 20 August 2003

SUGAR INDUSTRY AMENDMENT BILL

Mr CHRIS FOLEY (Maryborough—Ind) (10.55 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the bill. I note that one of the primary policy objectives of this bill is to require a mill owner to provide reasonable notice in the event of a mill closure to allow growers and millers to make other arrangements for the processing of the crop.

There is a tremendous win-win situation where our area can work well with Moreton with the closure of their mill to bring their sugar cane up to be milled in Maryborough. That will help increase the efficiency and sustainability of our region and help both regions together. Moreton needs to replace their haul-out fleet to suit transport cane trailers which are approximately 4.6 metres in height as existing haul-out equipment is limited to 4 metres. That is the only option if cane is to be milled in Maryborough, which is one of the primary objectives of the bill—to allow that cane to be milled in another area and those arrangements to be made.

It would be great to see B-double approvals for cane haulage on side roads. An example of this is the roads between Coolum and Yandina. This will increase the cost feasibility of transport and milling. I also call for increasing water allocations for the Lower Mary irrigation area at reasonable pricing. One of the areas that could be very helpful is the approval of flood harvest into off-stream water storage at an acceptably low cost.

Whilst acknowledging the environmental need of the rivers to be flushed out properly in flood times, in its primary objective this bill talks about the fact that if a mill like Moreton is closing down, if we can get that across to another mill then that is a win-win situation for both.

The Hon. Tom Barton mentioned co-generation. We would like to see government support for infrastructure for a co-generation plant at Maryborough sugar mill as well. Industry needs commitment to environmental sustainability and support in terms of farming practice from state and federal governments.