



Speech by

**Mrs D. PRATT**

**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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Hansard 26 February 2003

#### **DAIRY INDUSTRY**

**Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (11.06 p.m.): I rise to speak on the introduction of new fees that will impact heavily on the dairy industry. It appears that this government has some very warped ideas on helping primary producers maintain their viability. On the one hand, we have pledges about drought assistance packages, which are very welcome and significant when it comes to realistic help for them; on the other we have the impost of new charges not just for the dairy industry but also for a whole range of farming associated charges. This government appears to have no idea or fails to recognise the impacts when it gives with one hand and takes a great big slice back with the other. What it is doing to our battling rural communities and primary producers is atrocious.

The Premier was quoted recently in the *Courier-Mail* as saying that there will be some minor adjustment in the fees imposed. I presume these so-called minor adjustments are aimed at the farming and primary producer communities. In fact, in several cases I can only refer to them as verging on the untrue. In many of these cases there appears to be no adjustment, as the Premier so quaintly puts it. The truth is that many of them appear to be totally new charges. How can the government justify raising dairy farmers' accreditation fees to \$250 annually or DPI tick inspection fees not just for beef cattle but also for other breeds such as goats and llama? They do not even succumb to ticks. Add to that the audit and travelling fees.

There is no way that our dairy industry, decimated by deregulation, can compete against dairy farmers in Victoria who pay up to \$120 for accreditation. The DPI and its minister have just added another average cost of \$600 to each Queensland dairy farm, at an overall profit of \$900,000. That is three times the cost of providing the service. These fees are completely unjustified.

Another developing trick of the government appears to be to start up a state controlled corporation to let it fight out these unpopular costs and decisions so that government appears to remain squeaky clean. Safe Food may be the new name of the Queensland Dairy Authority, formed to take the heat for the minister, just as Burnett Water was formed to take the heat for Natural Resources. What has happened to all of the former QDA and DNR specialist staff? Has the government created a new bureaucracy to look like it is achieving its jobs, jobs, jobs—that cute little phrase—or is it, as I suggest, a corporation that acts as a punching bag to protect the ministers? It goes hand in hand with a state government policy of confusing people by always accusing the Commonwealth whenever there is a lack of money or hard decisions have to be made. It is time for the government to wake up and accept the responsibility for decisions it was elected to make.

You can fool some of the people some of the time, but the time is fast approaching when the majority will not be fooled. The government's expanding arrogance over its large numbers in this House will not last forever. I call on the House to make ministers responsible for their actions by actually doing their jobs, not passing them off to some bureaucrat in a government controlled corporate office.

Time expired.