



Speech by

ELISA ROBERTS

MEMBER FOR GYMPIE

Hansard 26 November 2003

DAIRY INDUSTRY

Miss ELISA ROBERTS (Gympie—Ind) (12.30 a.m.): As most honourable members would be aware, the effects of deregulation upon the dairy industry in Queensland have been in many cases difficult to endure, with many farmers being forced to leave the industry, others remaining but barely making ends meet, and there are also those who have become suicidal. Those who reside in either rural or regional Queensland would be aware that not a lot has changed for dairy farmers, and this is no less apparent than in my electorate of Gympie.

Recently, the chief executive officer of Woolworths visited Gympie at the request of Ron Boswell. The Nationals are busy back-peddalling and desperately trying to win back the support base they lost when their federal counterparts deregulated the dairy industry. However, this recent meeting failed to achieve anything positive for the dairy farmers whom I represent. The CEO stated that he was not able to give any more money to milk producers but that he would ring the Prime Minister. Whilst the poor old CEO of Woolworths could not spare any money to pass on to the dairy farmers from the sale of milk in Queensland, it has come to my attention that a small supermarket located north of Gympie is able to sell Pauls milk for \$2.29 for a two litre bottle, whereas Woolworths in Gympie sells the same milk for \$2.82. Naturally, this small supermarket would not have the enormous buying or bargaining power of a major chain, so why is it necessary for Woolworths to make such a huge profit when a small store can sell milk at such a low price and still make a profit?

We all know what milk producers receive per litre for their milk, and this is rarely enough for a producer to even break even. I find it reprehensible that large supermarkets are able to make such incredibly high profits while the people who do the hard yards to ensure that fresh milk is kept on the shelves hardly reap any benefits at all. To a dairy farmer every cent counts. If these large supermarkets had any compassion whatsoever they would be prepared to pass on some of their profit margin to those on whom they rely so much and who are in such financial straits. It is time that people such as the Woolworths CEO did the Aussie thing and helped their mate.