



Speech by

**Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK**

**MEMBER FOR INALA**

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Hansard 10 September 2003

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Mushroom Month; Sugar Industry**

**Hon. H. PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (10.11 a.m.): Last week I officially launched Mushroom Month. Mushrooms are often underrated, but the Australian industry is significant, generating almost \$200 million per annum. Queensland is the third largest producer after Victoria and New South Wales. Australians' consumption of mushrooms has jumped from 650 grams to three kilograms over the past 30 years. Eighty-six per cent of Australian households buy mushrooms and 55 per cent of them buy mushrooms at least once per week.

It is great to see the federal government playing its part for Mushroom Month, but the efforts that it has gone to to keep every section of the sugar industry in the dark about its position on reform have been remarkable. The current spot price of sugar teetering on US6c per pound should be energising those federal MPs who have a genuine concern about the future of the sugar industry. That spot price equates to approximately \$200 per tonne. That is up to \$130 per tonne below the survival price quoted in the federal government's own Hildebrand report.

When I introduced the reforms in April this year, the government was accused of rushing through the reforms. This is clearly not the case. We signed the MOU with the federal government in September last year. We developed the legislative amendments to reflect the areas we had both agreed needed reform. We introduced the legislation in April and we have waited for four months for the federal government to tell us its position. We heard it say that the only outstanding issue was about arbitration and we offered compromise.

As a government we believe in the sugar industry. We want to save it. The federal government—and that includes the National Party—is prepared to sell Telstra, but it is not prepared to save the sugar industry.