



Speech by

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FOOD PRODUCTION [SAFETY] REGULATION 2002

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (9.50 p.m.): I thank the member for Toowoomba South for pre-empting my speech. If he had been that good as opposition leader, he would still be in that position. Why does he think that we have these regulations? To protect the industry; to protect what we have. Previously, the Leader of the Opposition said, 'I've never heard of any incident involving unpasteurised milk.' I will blow that one away. The opposition members reckon that they stand up for dairy farmers. They should get their heads around this one. Two weeks ago, 113 teachers and students went to a camp where they were to inspect a dairy farm—to learn how it all operated, to see the magnificent hygiene that existed on that farm. What happened? Twenty-one were reported ill. The opposition says, 'I have never heard of that.' They do not read the information.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr MICKEL: What did the Health Department say? The honourable member interjecting used to be the health minister. He was a disaster then, too. He loves to talk about debt and taxes. I refer to the Horan health tax. Every time a doctor or a nurse was placed in a joint, he wanted to rip them out with a tax. He knows all about taxes! What did the health report say? Twenty-one children were injured and they expected the number to go higher. That is why we have to put these standards in place. That is what it is all about.

How ironic that the National Party worries about standards. What has inundated the news over the past couple of days? It is the poor quality of drugs in Australia. Why are people worried about it? Because they are worried about their health. That is why we have to have these standards. A few years ago—

Mr Hopper interjected.

Mr MICKEL: Yes, the member was in another party then. 'Hopper the swapper' wanders into this House tonight dragging his conflict of interest behind him like some sort of coat-tails. The honourable member for Toowoomba South gave him up. He said, 'All of these farmers know how to operate their farms.' He should look at the fellow sitting two seats up from him. Did he know how to operate anything? The only thing that the member has known how to do is rat on everybody in the place. He ratted on his own constituency and he ratted on the member for Toowoomba South in the leadership challenge. So the member for Darling Downs should not come into this place with his conflict of interest, wandering around the place moaning about dairy farmers. The only thing that he has done for dairy farmers is make a good living out of them.

The point is this: we need to have quality standards in health. If members opposite doubt that for a moment, they should look at what poor health standards have done to the world economy. Have the members opposite ever heard of SARS? In Hong Kong, 5,000 restaurants have closed and hotel occupancy rates are less than five per cent. SARS will take 0.5 per cent off growth. And the members opposite are not worried about quality! They are not worried about health standards!

The members opposite come into this place and talk about tax. They have the highest taxing coalition government in history. If the members opposite want to talk about tax, they should tell us about the dairy tax that every consumer pays to prop up the income of the member for Darling Downs. They should tell us about the sugar tax, the Ansett tax and the Medicare tax that they have just whacked us with. The members opposite know all about tax. They come into this place shedding

crocodile tears and saying that the Labor government has gone broke. So our answer to that is to worsen the deficit. What economic lunacy are they on about?

For those members who are new to this place, three years ago in this parliament we had to debate the standards of the now missing member for Hinchinbrook, who could not stomach tonight's debate. That is why he put on that little pantomime performance this morning. He sent the QLMA broke not once, but twice. He would have wrecked the Queensland meat industry—absolutely wrecked it. That would have sent the quality of the meat in the butcher shops south. That was the member's contribution to Queensland's primary industries.

The member for Toowoomba South said, 'No, none of this will happen.' Those jokers opposite reckon that they represent rural areas. They know nothing about them. We in the Labor Party are trying to protect the export industries, such as the meat industry, which is putting in first-class health standards so that it can trace its product right from where it is packaged back to the paddock where it came from—at a cost of millions of dollars. Why? Because we understand what it means when there is a cargo of meat held up, when there is a roo in the stew scandal, which was caused by the National Party being asleep at the wheel. Those members who represent rural areas should tell the people what this crowd opposite are on about. That is why their vote in Maryborough was 16 per cent. We should float those jokers opposite. Then we would probably get a little bit more value out of them.

Farmers in rural areas get no value out of the members opposite, because this motion is about ratting on farmers. It is selling them down the drain on the basis of some fee they reckon that they are standing up for. Queensland depends on a quality product. It is the Queensland meat industry and it is a quality product. How else do the members opposite think that we got into the Singapore pork industry trade? How else do the members opposite think that we were able to do that, at a moment's notice, when the nipa virus broke out? They took Australian product. Why? They took it because they knew that it was of first-class quality.

I make no apologies for the Labor Party standing up for what we have always believed in: primary producers, export industries and processing jobs. That is what is at stake.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr MICKEL: No wonder the members opposite are screaming at me. They do not want to hear it. The only way that we can protect the Australian export industry and Queensland primary producers is to knock out this opposition motion and to see it for what it is: a shabby attempt at political propaganda to try to lift their vote, as they did in Maryborough, from 14 per cent to 16 per cent. That is all they are worth.