



Speech by

Liz Cunningham

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Hansard Thursday, 21 October 2004

PRIMARY INDUSTRY BODIES REFORM AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (6.14 p.m.): In rising to speak to the Primary Industry Bodies Reform Amendment Bill, I acknowledge that previous speakers have addressed the detail of the bill and the technical changes that it will bring into reality. There is a point of clarification that I seek from the minister. This is the final element in the reform of a number of former statutory organisations—the Queensland Canegrowers Organisation, Queensland Dairy Farmers Organisation, Queensland Fruit and Vegetable Growers Organisation, Queensland Pork Producers Organisation and the Queensland Commercial Fisherman's Organisation. Looking across that range of primary producer organisations, I cannot help but see that in each of the elements they have been under significant commercial pressure. In most cases they have also been affected by deregulation and some have been greatly affected by overseas imports and, in some instances, dumping.

The strength of the organisations that existed previously in some ways has been decimated by loss of licences, as in the commercial fishing organisation; deregulation in the dairy industry; the fruit and vegetable growers organisation has also changed its operation; and Canegrowers, as I said, has already been outlined by previous speakers.

In the confusion of change—and I mean 'confusion' because a lot of changes occurred in a fairly short period of time—I was seeking clarification from the minister in relation to what supports the department has provided in this instance to the cane farmers to be able to assume the responsibility for the running of and the decision making in this new voluntary corporation. By saying that I am not insinuating that canegrowers are incapable of making these decisions. They are going to have to singly or multiply bargain collectively in terms of the milling, but I am concerned that with a number of these organisations—particularly the fruit and vegie growers, the commercial fishing organisation and the dairying organisation—many of the farmers themselves have been through personal upheaval, significant financial pressure and in some instances a percentage of those producers have exited the organisation, either coming out with an ability to re-establish themselves and others have left the industry in more tragic circumstances.

I seek clarification from the minister as to what assistance the DPI will be offering the canegrowers as they do this restructuring, as they assume responsibility for the new voluntary structure and as they assume decision making and, in that assistance, what costs the DPI might be placing on those voluntary groups to fulfil their responsibilities under this new structure.