



Speech by

Mike Horan

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

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PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND FISHERIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (2.00 p.m.): Before speaking on the Primary Industries and Fisheries Legislation Amendment Bill, I want to thank the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries and the House for the courtesies extended to allow me to speak for more than 20 minutes if required as the shadow minister as I had to attend a police memorial service this morning. It meant a lot for me to attend because of my father's service and awards, so I really do appreciate that courtesy.

This is a miscellaneous bill that repeals an old act and amends a number of acts. For a start, it repeals the Sawmills Licensing Act 1936. This act, which has licensed sawmillers, veneer and plywood mills, has been assessed as not complying with the national competition policy and as unnecessary, so therefore it has been repealed. Timber Queensland has been consulted and apparently Timber Queensland has no particular concerns. The repeal will result in some revenue loss for the government through the loss of annual licence fees, but that loss is expected to be offset because there will be a lesser cost of maintaining the licence registry and other costs associated with it.

This bill also amends the Stock Act 1915 and the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981 in particular to clarify the appeals process. It provides for another level of appeal beyond the Magistrates Court in the case of the Stock Act and the District Court in the case of the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act. Whilst it may not necessarily be associated—it is associated in some way—with these acts, I asked a question in parliament a couple of weeks ago of the minister regarding the longevity of the court case that the government was undertaking in litigation against the people associated with Bindaree Beef in the Kingaroy court. The question that I asked related in particular to why that court was picked, because there is a travelling system associated with that court and it could well be expected that that case may take a long time to come into play. That is what has happened.

It has been some three years since the Department of Primary Industries took action in that court as an agent for the national disease eradication trust account, which is a cattle industry trust account. Some three years has elapsed. The minister came into the parliament and said that the matter was due to the death of a key witness and so forth. With a case like this and the fact that there would be other people in DPI who know about the matter rather than just one person, one would have thought that a matter could have been cleared up in less than three years, because there is the matter of \$170,000 owing to the cattle industry of Australia—that is, those people who have contributed through a system of levies and so forth to the national disease eradication trust account. To have something sit in the courts for three years is just beyond the pale.

Mr Palaszczuk: Warren Truss gave you all that information.

Mr HORAN: No, he did not.

Mr Palaszczuk: I was told he did.

Mr HORAN: Whoever gave me the information, I would not tell the minister. However, it was not Warren Truss. With regard to the amendments to the Stock Act and the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act,

these amendments arose from a claim by an owner of a cattle property seeking compensation against the state for destocking large numbers of cattle under the Stock Act. It was then discovered that there was no express reference within the act to further the rights of appeal after a Magistrates Court decision, so this amendment clarifies this issue. This bill also amends the Food (Production) Safety Act to ensure that commercial game meat harvesting was not excluded from the act. I would ask the minister to give us some assurance that, whilst game meat harvesting is now included in the act, it has to be a practical inclusion, because harvesting of game meat is a difficult process that occurs in the bush. We do want to see safe protocols and systems in place, but it has to be practical and sensible.

There are also amendments to the Grain Industry (Restructuring) Act 1991 which provides for a Queensland review of wheat marketing arrangements following a national review of the wheat single desk export arrangement. This amendment ensures state reviews only have to happen if the federal government plans to dismantle the single desk arrangements. The amendments also remove references to the former Queensland grain handling and marketing body, Grainco Ltd, which is no longer a Queensland grower owned and controlled company. While I am on the subject of the issue of the single desk, it is a very important aspect to Queensland. Queensland has about 800,000 hectares of wheat grown annually. Production averages in the order of one million tonnes. Whilst we are not a big wheat producer like Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales, it is worth a large amount of money to our economy with a gross value of production in 2003-04 in the area of \$240 million or more. The retention of the single desk is important.

With regard to the Australian Wheat Board, there is an overseeing body within the federal legislation that operates to ensure that the Wheat Board is competitive, that it is doing everything possible on behalf of the growers and that it is delivering results. That acts as a safety net to ensure that, whilst it does have single desk status, it is of benefit and of great value to the wheat industry. The single desk system delivers benefits to not only growers but also rural communities and country towns throughout Queensland and Australia. It gets this value through price premiums, reducing the supply chain cost and risk management, and the risk management system is important and gives Australian wheat growers access to two billion consumers in over 50 countries around the world. I have had the opportunity to look at the risk management system that is undertaken by the Wheat Board. It is quite staggering. It is almost like a mini sharemarket with operators there for long hours each and every day and people on call at night to ensure that the prices and the changes in values of currency throughout the world are monitored all the time and any necessary selling arrangements that they make and undertake are to the best possible advantage to the wheat growers.

Having one face in international markets ensures price confidentiality and that the Australian growers are not played off against each other in international markets. At the same time, the single desk continues to underpin the market as a buyer of last resort, ensuring that all of Australia's 36,000 wheat farmers have ongoing access to the export market. The Australian Wheat Board Ltd through its wholly owned subsidiary AWBI—or the Australian Wheat Board International Ltd—is in a unique position with its direct line of sight between the international customer and domestic wheat growers to convey emerging market needs to breeders and growers in order to build international demand and capture price premiums.

Growers received clear and transparent price signals that were achieved through a very sophisticated payment system, which is called the AWB Golden Awards. A very conservative estimate of these benefits suggest that the single desk arrangement delivers premiums of AUD\$13 per tonne or approximately AUD\$200 million in benefit to growers. So from those figures members can see the importance of the single desk selling arrangement to the wheat industry in Queensland and in Australia.

This bill that we are debating also amends the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 to align more closely the powers of police to respond to animal welfare incidents to those powers of inspectors employed under the Animal Care and Protection Act. That has to be a good thing, because we would like to see police being able to undertake those duties where they have to and in the interests of good and sensible animal welfare. I have a lot of time for the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act. I saw it develop when we were in government and its ensuing development occurred under the Labor government. That act has a lot of checks and balances. Generally speaking, the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act gives police sensible ways in which to act. It enables them to go about their job in a good, practical manner. It also includes a number of checks and balances and responsibilities to enable the public to have confidence in what the police are undertaking and to enable the police to know that, if they work within the parameters of their responsibilities, then in terms of their own actions, they are able to exercise their powers in a safe way.

The bill also contains a range of amendments to the Fisheries Act 1994, which includes removing the requirement for government approval before a transfer of authority, including a fishing quota, can take place. Those amendments will mean that only notification to the government rather than official approval is required. I ask the minister if he could give us some detailed explanation of that amendment in his reply. The bill also amends the Fisheries Act to provide for a better exchange of information between fisheries enforcement agencies. It proposes the establishment of a communication framework to provide better

cooperation between enforcement agencies, but it also balances that with privacy considerations. Further amendments to the Fisheries Act make it an offence to obstruct, hinder or resist the Boating and Fisheries Patrol officers in their investigations. A lack of clear definition has made it difficult for officers who have been threatened and assaulted. This amendment gives Boating and Fisheries Patrol officers the same protection that is given to officers who act under the Animal Care and Protection Act. Similarly, with the powers provided to police under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act, I would like to see our Boating and Fisheries Patrol officers able to act in a practical way to enforce the act and the regulations that they are charged with enforcing. But, like the behaviour of police, we expect courtesy and we expect that those Boating and Fisheries Patrol officers would act in a way that does not inflame any situations. That is the sort of task that the police have. That is the sort of task that our Boating and Fisheries Patrol officers have. In that regard, I conveyed to the department a matter and I am pleased that the minister was able to look into the matter and deal with it.

In debating this bill today, I want to raise a number of issues that are of great concern to people who live in rural areas or who are involved in the fishing areas of the state. Firstly, I turn to the issue of fishing. When I consider the plethora of restrictions and close-downs that have been heaped upon the fishing industry of Queensland in recent years, I doubt that there would be one group of hardworking people in this state who have been attacked more than those who work in the fishing industry. Like the farming industry, the vast bulk of the fishing industry is made up of families and there are some fishing companies. These people want a sustainable fishing industry that they can operate in a profitable way and that their families can operate in a profitable way. Because that industry is sustainable, it will continue to enable them to make a living, to invest in the industry, to modernise their equipment and change their techniques as necessary, and also maybe to put something aside for their superannuation—as all people hope to do—to look after themselves and their families in their old age.

I want to refer to some of the things that have happened to the fishing industry. First of all, at a Commonwealth level there has been the establishment of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, which put in place zones in the Barrier Reef for the protection of the Barrier Reef. I have spoken to a lot of fishing people about this issue. It has been a difficult issue for them to handle, but the one common thing that they say is, 'At least they sat down and consulted in great depth with the fishing industry and the communities along the coast.' Whilst those people might not agree with all the issues surrounding the zones that have been applied and the extent of the zones, they say, 'At last we got a fair go when it came to consultation and endeavouring to put our point of view across.'

At a state government level, there have been issues such as the trawl plan, the coral reef line fishing arrangements, and the various close-downs or the cutbacks of individual fishing areas along the coast. More recently, there has been the issue of complementary zones, which was a process that was undertaken by the Department of Environment. That department took this very important matter relating to the fishing industry out of the hands of the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and out of the hands of the Minister for Primary Industries—although I would hope that he would still stand up in cabinet for this industry that he is supposed to represent. Whilst people have had this massive impost of the complementary zones drawn across them like a blanket, at the same time the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries is about to undertake an inshore line fishing review. So those people are going to be hit with a double whammy. It will hit those complementary zones and the zones immediately adjacent to them. There are also issues such as the Great Sandy Straits Marine Park and a whole lot of other issues to do with catching devices and the times during which people are able to fish in particular areas.

I want to reiterate that I have attended port meetings, I have met with fishing families, and I have met with people who are involved in various sectors of the industry in both a small and a large way. I am highly impressed by the environmental responsibility of these people. They are like a lot of forestry people whom I know. In my previous position of running the Toowoomba Royal Showgrounds, I had to get a lot of timber for the woodchopping events. I know that the minister has an interest in agricultural shows. The families who got the timber for us in the forestry areas around Crows Nest were third and fourth generation timber farmers. The business had been handed down from father to son or daughter and so forth. All of those people were unbelievably environmentally responsible. They would go to blocks of land and take only particular mature trees that would allow adolescent and other large trees to receive sunlight and achieve their potential. Those people would not return to those blocks—they would not be allowed to return to those blocks—for 40 years, by which time there would be another crop of a few trees in that area that would have grown. That kept the forest healthy. That was probably one of the most environmentally sustainable industries that we could ever get.

Surely God gave us trees and timber to build houses and shelters and to do it in a sustainable way. Those families, those workers and those people who were working in the sawmills or driving the timber jinkers or doing all the other associated jobs, such as going into timber areas and marking which trees could be taken and those which could not and so forth, and those small businesses that were involved with chainsaws, trucks and heavy equipment were responsible and knew what they were doing. They are the sorts of people who are being hit by some of these crazy arrangements. The Greens think that they are the

only people—and the Labor Party kowtows to the Greens—who care about the environment. No-one cares about the environment more than those people who rely upon it for a living for themselves and their families. They have inherited it from their family before them and they want to pass it on to the next generation. That is what struck me about people who fish sustainably in the fishing industry.

I refer to one of the closures by the department around Wolf Rock because of the grey nurse sharks. They are bottom-feeding sharks. They are down there in the sand. The people who had the licence only fished on the top. They had a system of fishing just in the top part of the water. They had not seen a shark, let alone caught a shark, for years and years, yet they were told they could not fish within a radius of some incredible amount from that rock, which meant that they lost about 40 per cent of their income. This is affecting people in their late 50s who are looking towards eventual retirement.

Some of the things that are happening to the fishing industry are so wrong. It is not a case that the fishing industry does not want to cooperate. The fishing industry has bent over backwards to cooperate and to maintain sustainability. It wants to do things based on true and honest science. It wants to do things based on the experience and knowledge it has through generations of fishing in these particular areas. No-one knows the habits of the fish, the sea and the tide or just how much fish is available better than these people who have this huge corporate knowledge passed on to them by their families, many of whom have been fishing these waters for 20, 30 and 40 years. I think it is time that governments and government departments in general, and this minister and the current department in particular, started to listen to these people and take real notice. They are good, hardworking working class families who deserve respect not only for what they are doing for their families, their communities and our economy but also for the way they are respecting the environment and for the knowledge they have.

I refer to the coral reef line fishing arrangements. The quota of some 4,800 tonnes a year was reduced to 3,600-odd tonnes a year. Science undertaken by the cooperative centre for research in north Queensland showed that that quota was cut by 400 tonnes too much. It could have been 400 tonnes greater and the coral reef fishing industry would have remained absolutely sustainable. In the course of that process people who have undertaken that industry for many, many years have been severely affected.

I will read a letter from a fisherman in Mackay who has been severely affected. Everyone has a different story and everyone has been affected by what has happened. I think people would be able to accept it if the cutback was made on a scientific basis. People could accept a cutback knowing that it would leave a sustainable fishery. But to cut it back that much is so disappointing to these particular people. Mr Kris McNamara from Mackay details his particular problem emanating from that plan in a letter written to the Premier about the coral reef fin fish fishery plan. It states—

I wish to bring to your attention the consequences of the Plan on long-term participants in the reef line fishery.

Under the plan, my family will be allocated 6.4 tonnes of coral trout per year. On average, over the last eight years, we have caught between 16 and 19 tonnes of coral trout per year. We are a family based operation with two families, my parents and myself, my wife and two children. In total, my father and I have a combined history of 60 years in the fishing industry. We have been totally reliant on the reef line fishery for eight years. Prior to this we were involved in reef line, mud crab and netting in some capacity every year. We were issued with a fishery symbol for the reef fishery when the Qld Fish Management Authority first issued them in 1983.

Prior to 1993 we owned a fishing vessel, Gentle Ben, and a two dory reef line licence, and this we sold in 1993, as neither was big enough to support my parents and myself. We then bought a three dory licence and began building a new fishing vessel, Holly-J. This vessel was completed and launched in early 1996. We then moved to Mackay and began reef line fishing on the reefs off the Mackay coast in June of that year. When we began building Holly-J in 1993, we had no knowledge that an investment warning would be issued. The QFMA issued a warning in May 1997 that investment in the fishery or increased effort may not be recognised. We observed the investment warning as our investment was completed by June 1996 and our effort in the following years was contingent on the fact that we are a family operation. When it became evident that the live trout market was a lucrative one licences were purchased by foreign owned companies, businessmen and those who had perhaps payouts from other industries and consequently the effort on the reef escalated to an unsustainable level through the increased efforts these operators placed on the reef. These licences changed hands AFTER the investment warning in May 1997 and it would appear that some of these 'new' operators have suffered little loss in their quota allocation because they happened to purchase a licence with good history before 1997. Those long term operators who had been in the industry, some their whole working lives, have been penalised for their conservative fishing practices whilst new operators to the industry have gained through their exploitation of the reef.

Under the plan our family will be forced out of an industry that we have been involved in and worked in all of our working lives and through no fault of our own. Foreign owned companies, businessmen and those out to 'make a killing' have been the winners under this plan whilst those of us who have put the long term commitment, and our lives and souls into the fishing industry and have used safe and environmentally friendly practices have been penalised. Company owned boats are the ones who have 'flogged' the reef through their ability (financially) to work the reef continually through the year whilst family operations do not work as much through their family commitments.

This man was asking for some recognition, some form of compensation, for those who held their fishing licence prior to May 1997 for losing so much of their quota through no wrongdoing. I have seen the details of how much he was cut back in the coral trout line units, the red throat emperor line units and the other coral reef line units. It was an absolutely dramatic cutback that would have made it almost impossible for him to make a living. I will read a letter from Mr Kris McNamara of Mackay to the manager of the Reef Line Fisheries in DPIF regarding the decision notice that was given to him. It states—

Re: Decision Notice—Additional (RQ) Line Units

I refer to the above notice dated August 16, 2004. In this notice, the Department has granted our licence QFV11738B, boat mark FXHQ, additional units of CT 522, RTE 854 and OS 532 as additional units granted for being a long term operator under Division 3A of the Plan. Under the Plan long term operators were to receive 80% of the average recorded catch for the years 1994 to 1996.

I refer to our telephone conversation in which you informed me that although we were classed as a long term operator, unfortunately under the laws of the Management Plan there is no provision for our particular circumstance.

That was that circumstance I read out about constructing the new vessel. The letter continues—

I have had many conversations with yourself and other officers at the Department over the past months regarding our allocation of RQ line units and I am unable to accept that after a total of 25 years involvement in the line reef industry for myself and my father, that our family is granted such a low allocation through no wrongdoing of ourselves. It is grossly unfair that because we have not slotted into a 'pigeon hole' within the Plan, our livelihood has been taken from us. The allocation we have received has resulted in my wife returning to work and my parents having to consider applying for Government benefits to survive, as clearly the allocation would not support one family, let alone two. Pre 1996, long before the investment warning, our family put a plan in place to provide for our future (and our children) income by building a reef boat capable of supporting two families, which appears now to have caused our present predicament.

He has gone on to ask for assistance in bringing the case to the attention of the minister. He says—

Mr Palaszczuk (sic) is quoted in 'The Queensland Fisherman' July 2004 edition on page 9 as saying, in part, 'the Government is determined to ensure the coral reef fin fishery is sustainable. However, we want to ensure the management arrangements as equitable for those long-term operators who heeded effort and investment warnings of the late 1990s.'

I think, from reading these letters, these people deserve a fair go. I would be interested to hear what the minister can do. That is just one of a myriad of stories and different circumstances that have arisen out of the coral reef issue.

To give some other examples of how badly fishing families have been hit, take the Cape Bowling Green area. I spoke before about the complementary zones and the GBRMPA zones. There is GBRMPA coverage of that area, despite the fact that dugong in that area have been protected by the use of particular fishing devices. I understand the record is exemplary in that dugongs are not being caught because of these new devices and other arrangements that have been in place.

What will happen with the complementary zones is that they will force many of these fishing people up into the creeks. The Minister for the Environment said that they should go up into the creeks to fish, with no understanding or local knowledge of what these fishing families have. The creeks in the north get hot so they cannot undertake the crabbing that they can undertake in intertidal zones which will be wiped out by the complementary zones. You simply kill mud crabs by fishing in some of those particular areas.

In those creeks in that area, and in other areas of north Queensland, there is a plethora of restrictions anyway. For two days a week they are not allowed to net fish in those areas. In addition, there are other days in the week where the running tide means they cannot fish in those creeks. That brings it to a total of about 18 days per month that they are unable to fish in those creeks. On top of that, there is a three-month exclusion on fishing in that area at the latter part of the year every year. So they are left with something like 12 days per month for about nine months of the year to be able to fish, and no-one can make a living out of that.

Look at the flow-on effects. I have told of a courier service that used to run from Ayr to Townsville, taking people to the Townsville airport but also carrying light freight and earning in the order of \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year in the cartage of mud crabs for the Sydney and Melbourne market. There is an example of a small business which will lose a crucial part of its business through some of these restrictions.

Up and down the coast the story is the same. In the Hervey Bay area there is a need to have sensible arrangements. The fishing industry needs to be listened to with regard to the Great Sandy Straits marine park and the review that will take place by the state government into inshore line fishing. Would you not have thought they would have done that in association with the complementary zones? The fishing industry in coastal areas has been hit with a double whammy. The vast area of that complementary zone is the area between the high and low-water mark. At least 80 per cent of Queensland's mud crab and barramundi fishing takes place in those areas. Large amounts will be knocked out of the ring totally. We lose not only an iconic species in seafood restaurants—something which is important to our industry and for people who enjoy eating seafood—but also all communities up and down the coast are affected.

I would have hoped the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries through the minister could have been involved in these discussions and negotiations regarding the complementary zones. I would have hoped there could have been some commonsense in doing it jointly with the inshore line fishing review that will be undertaken. Bear in mind that many of these families have had enough of the non-stop assaults on them. I spoke to a woman who is a fisher at one of the port meetings, and she told me that the pressure on families is unbearable. It is hard enough to be out there on a boat in all weather trying to make a living for yourself and your family, let alone having to make never ending submissions and cases to answer to justify where you can go, what you can do and where you can fish.

It is about time governments started to take notice of all these good, decent people who believe in a sustainable environment. Governments need to have a bit of courage to do the right thing by putting on work restrictions through true science and the practical knowledge that resides in the operators of these

areas. It should not jump to the tune of some greenies based in Sydney, Melbourne or Canberra. It should start to listen to the people who care about the environment and do the right thing by these people.

Through all these restrictions, closures and cutbacks, the concentration of effort is going into ever smaller and smaller areas and is putting unbelievable pressure on the species and those particular areas of the environment. It stands to reason that, if you are trying to force people out of a particular area, they will move to the now limited areas where they can fish and you end up with two or three times as many people in that area. If anything is going to do damage to the environment and to the sustainability of fish stocks, it is that concentration of effort. Many fishing people tell me about that. It is commonsense to most people but not to those who want to continually flog the fishing industry and their families in the obscene chase of green votes without any care for good, honest, hardworking people.

I want to talk about the introduction of the national livestock identification system and the disgraceful and pathetic support that is being given by this government to the introduction of that system. One of the great industries in Queensland, particularly with regards to earning export dollars for our state and providing jobs right throughout the beef supply chain, is the Queensland beef industry. It is an industry worth \$3 billion a year to the state and it provides jobs not only on beef cattle properties but also in the processing industry, in transport, in saleyards and in the myriad of produce, supply and hardware type organisations producing pumps, steel posts, polypipe, veterinary chemicals and so on. It is a huge industry and it has a huge linkage to small business and to export, whether it be live export, chilled beef export, export of beef to America or export of prime beef to Japan, Korea and other parts of the world. It is a great industry. Export industries are important for our state because they bring in outside money. That is where we get growth and prosperity to be able to do the things that governments want to do.

The introduction of the national livestock identification system is a very important thing. As I have said before in this place, it allows us to stay at the forefront of quality assurance, quality control, disease control and customer confidence. The introduction of this scheme was a difficult issue because it was going to add to costs. Anyone running a cattle property knows that, when it costs \$3.50 to \$3.80 for a device to put into the ears of cattle at branding time or at other times with other classes of cattle, it means extra cost. At the very minimum, it means the cost of the tag as opposed to the normal systems that most people used, which was a tag that cost 75c to \$1.

Putting that aside, and despite the controversy that has been associated with it—controversy along the line that a number of experienced cattle people have said we have a wonderful system with our brand and tail tag system—look at what has happened in America where 70-odd cattle came in from Canada and one was found to have mad cow disease. Something like 35 of those cattle still have not been found because of inadequate trace systems. Look at the problems that occurred in Britain and Canada. Perhaps more importantly, look at how our beef is sold and marketed—whether we are selling to sophisticated major chains that demand quality assurance and trace back, and whether we are selling to the nations that simply want to use trace back as a bargaining tool as to whether they buy it from us or from others. It does mean that we are at the forefront of marketing, particularly when it comes to export and customer confidence when it is for a local domestic consumer or for export.

It is important. It is providing security or customer opportunity not only for those people who grow beef—that is their livelihood—but also for all those people in the chain because members only have to look at what happened when there have been major outbreaks in other countries to see the number of people who would lose jobs. Many of those people could be paying off their house, car and so forth, and to lose work—or lose a number of hours of work a week if you are in a processing plant—could be disastrous for many of those people. It is an industry that is broad, and it runs down the chain.

For that reason the implementation of this NLIS system was worthy of reasonable support in its implementation. It means that saleyards and abattoirs have to put in place sophisticated equipment. For example, at saleyards like the ones at Roma, which can have anywhere between 7,000 and 10,000 head of cattle, when cattle are sold hundreds of lines of those cattle go to private buyers or meatworks buyers, et cetera. The frenetic activity is unbelievable. The saleyards have to put in sophisticated rows of turnstile type monitoring equipment to read these tags. If one tag in 100 does not read, how does someone find one beast out of 8,000 and bring it back and run it through again and so forth? It is costly. There would be over 20 major saleyards in Queensland. It is probably going to cost a quarter of a million dollars or half a million dollars to put in the facilities required just at the Roma yards. That is important. Likewise, at meatworks and small processing plants, all this trace back and follow through and sophisticated equipment that goes with the chain has to be put into place. Likewise, on cattle properties reading equipment has to be put in place. Some people who are involved in EU accreditation—EU cattle—do have that in place. For those people who simply breed, brand and sell weaners—a simple operation like that—it is a relatively simple process of tagging their calves at branding time.

But in the cattle industry many farmers have different paddocks in different parts of their district. Some farmers have properties elsewhere. Many people are buying cattle, bringing them in, fattening them up and shifting them here and there. Some people are shifting heifers from one place to another place and so on. For all those myriad movements that occur people have to read the tags, so they have to have

reading equipment on their crush or they have to have rod type equipment. Some people only have a few head of cattle on a small place. Some old ladies are on a few acres and that is their interest. Other people have little hobby farms and have that as their interest. There are all these varieties of people involved in the industry.

For all those reasons there needs to be reasonable support. I always give the example of Indy. There is \$11 million a year to help run the Indy car race for this great, wealthy American corporation involved in running it for the prize money that will go to all these overseas drivers and so forth. We are lucky if we have one or two Australian drivers. No-one would begrudge support of Indy because of what it does for tourism in Australia, for how it markets tourism on the Gold Coast through TV and for what it does for the Gold Coast itself. Then look at the \$3 billion a year, 365 days of the year cattle industry. It suddenly gets an impost like this. It is a very important one. It is going to have a severe financial impost. In the last few weeks or months the prices in the saleyards have been good but they go up and down, and people are suffering drought. It is not much good if farmers are in a drought area and the prices are good but they are struggling to keep the cows on their feet. This is an industry which is Queensland wide. It has brought in benefits to working people and small businesses throughout the state. It is an industry that deserves something a little bit better than the \$690,000 that this government put into the NLIS support system.

In the budget the minister spoke about \$4.5 million for NLIS. We have been able to expose the fact that the vast bulk of that was money for things which have been done for decades, such as property registration and brands registration. The DPI has always done that, and it has always been funded for that. To stand up in the budget and say that there is money for NLIS when it is money for the normal, everyday ordinary things that the department has done is incorrect. The amount that is available is \$690,000. Subsequently, the minister announced \$500,000 for extra staffing to support that NLIS system, but it is absolutely pathetic when members look at what has been provided in other states.

Queensland is the biggest beef producing state in Australia. We have over 50 per cent of the herd. We have a higher percentage of our cattle exported compared to other states. Some of these states have since increased the support that they are providing, New South Wales in particular. New South Wales is providing \$5.4 million for saleyard, feedlot and abattoir infrastructure, a tag subsidy for dairy cows and capping the tag cost at \$2.50. Victoria has a \$1 per tag subsidy, \$1.25 million for infrastructure and \$350,000 for communications funding in that year. South Australia has a 70c per tag subsidy during implementation, with up to \$450,000 for saleyards and abattoirs, and Western Australia has a tag subsidy of \$1 per device up to \$1.2 million and over \$1 million in abattoir and saleyard infrastructure funding. The minister always talks about, 'Oh, yeah, but they pay beef levies,' and all this sort of thing. Not all those states pay beef levies. In a number of states a subsidy is provided where they do not pay a beef levy. In any case, in all of those states the overall subsidy being provided is far greater than what is being provided in Queensland.

It is a shame to think that under the Beattie Labor government a \$3 billion industry receives such low priority and such low recognition, particularly for an industry that is so important domestically and so important in the bringing in of export income to our state. I would hope that the minister would take note of what is being said, go to the cabinet table and start to fight for some real dollars for what is one of our great industries in Queensland. You almost feel ashamed to think that we lead Australia as the beef state of Australia, and that our assistance is so pitiful compared to the other states of Australia. It really shows where this government's priorities lie. It is easy to get \$11 million for Indy and it is easy to get millions for some other projects and so on, but when it comes to a modest amount of funding to support something which is so vital to our export industry—and all the time we are providing free grants to companies who say they are going to develop exports and so on—here is something to sustain, save, preserve and grow our export industry and the amount that is provided under NLIS is an absolute pittance and a disgrace.

I want to speak about drought. This is another area where the Beattie Labor government has been found wanting. There has been a campaign by the minister to denigrate at every chance he can what the Commonwealth government does. This is a smokescreen to cover the pitiful support provided by the state government.

The drought system is something which has been worked out by the state governments in association with the federal government. The state governments provide drought assistance in each state based on the one in 10 year drought occurrence. That is a strong drought but not as severe as what the federal government has to provide assistance for. When the drought occurrence gets to a one in 20- to 25-year drought, that is when the federal government steps in with the exceptional circumstances program, a program that provides interest subsidy, for example, and provides welfare payments so that families are able to put food on the table and are able to survive.

The drought assistance program run by the state government has a couple of elements. One element is a system of loans: the carry-on finance loan and the recovery loan. When those loan systems were implemented the minister said there were over 50,000 properties in Queensland in 111 shires that could benefit from those drought schemes. I ask members to guess how many people have successfully been able to obtain a loan under the carry-on or drought recovery scheme. There have been just over 140;

just over 100 in one scheme and just over 40 in the other scheme. Around about one and a half people per shire or 145 properties out of over 50,000 drought affected properties have been able to access the state government drought scheme.

The minister announced in parliament this week that the government will extend the drought carry-on finance loan scheme arrangement. It is like so many of the loans, whether it is in the sugar industry or some other industry: these multi million-dollar loan schemes are announced and hardly anyone takes them up. The government announces these schemes because it knows that the restrictions on the loan, the interest rates and the conditions on the loan provide very little, if any, advantage over what can be obtained commercially. The government knows that people in such dire financial circumstances can get into greater debt by taking out further loans after they have been hit by a natural disaster.

Under the government's drought declaration system there is a system of freight subsidy on fodder and also a freight subsidy on agisted cattle coming back from agistment.

In the last few months we have seen well over 40 drought declared areas of the state having their drought declaration revoked. The minister has made much of the fact that he makes those declarations only after a local drought committee makes the decision. The minister has said that the politics has been taken out of it; it is done by local people. Then the minister has the hide and hypocrisy to stand up in this parliament and criticise the federal government for revoking an exceptional circumstance when that revocation is done by NRAC, the National Rural Advisory Council, which makes the decision. In fact, NRAC goes out and inspects the rural areas. It has inspected areas on the Darling Downs. How difficult is it for NRAC to be able to make a decision about extending exceptional circumstances, for example, on the Darling Downs when the Minister for Primary Industries has revoked drought declarations in shires like Warwick, Pittsworth, Millmerran, Chinchilla and parts of the Wambo shire because the minister has said they are out of the one in 10 year drought, whereas exceptional circumstances is based on the one in 20 to 25 year drought?

It is time the minister stopped the hypocrisy of attacking for crass political purposes this process of drought revocation that has been carried out by an independent body when the minister's decisions are made by independent bodies.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Point of order. I take exception to those remarks. I am standing up for the 3,500 producers on the Darling Downs who missed out on their drought relief. The four members of the Darling Downs are not.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wallace): Order! Is the minister asking the honourable member to withdraw some remark?

Mr PALASZCZUK: I am asking the honourable member to withdraw that remark. I find it offensive.

Mr HORAN: Whatever particular remark the minister found offensive I will withdraw. The minister has confirmed what I have said. On the basis of independent committees the minister has revoked the drought declaration for shires like Warwick, Pittsworth, Millmerran, Chinchilla and parts of the Wambo shire for a one in 10 year drought—that is the state government's responsibility—and has made it that much more difficult for NRAC, the National Rural Advisory Council, to extend the exceptional circumstances. If NRAC are considering an extension of exceptional circumstances and they see the state government has revoked all their drought declarations on the Darling Downs for a one in 10 year drought, it makes it very difficult to put in place an exceptional circumstances declaration for a one in 20 year drought.

Mr PALASZCZUK: I find those remarks offensive. The process and methods of declaring shires and revoking shires in Brisbane have absolutely no relevance at all to what the federal government does. At the last ministerial council meeting, a rollover position was brought in—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HORAN: The minister cannot argue the case. He is obviously very sensitive to this issue. The minister has been playing politics with it. It has been a hypocritical thing to do. These people need help. The exceptional circumstances declaration on the Darling Downs was for two years, as all exceptional circumstances declarations are. It was extended for 12 months to three years. I understand the only other part of Australia where that has been provided at this stage is in the area around Bourke. It would be wonderful to see—if the guidelines were met—exceptional circumstances extended for further periods.

As I have said, when you have an area where the minister and his own committees can obviously see that there has been summer rainfall to the extent that they revoked all those state declarations for a one in 10 year drought, doesn't it make it difficult for NRAC? The minister says he is standing up for the people, yet he has gone and revoked these particular drought declarations. When the minister does the revocation he hides behind his local committees and says it is not him, it is the local committee. When the federal minister does it based on information from the independent NRAC, the minister is critical in order to cover up his own shortcomings.

Mr PALASZCZUK: I find those marks offensive. I do not hide behind any local drought committees. The committees make recommendations to me. Unlike the federal government, our drought relief continues for another two years, even though a shire is revoked.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I will ask the honourable member to withdraw those remarks.

Mr HORAN: The words the minister took offence to were that he hides behind the committees. I will withdraw that. The minister says that the decision was taken by the committee. The minister does not, in the case of federal exceptional circumstances, say that it was taken by the National Rural Advisory Council. It is one rule for the minister, but when it is done the same way by the federal government the minister wants to play politics. I think it is a tragedy. What we should be doing is working together to help these people to get better and practical drought assistance. The Primary Industries Minister in this state continually uses it as a smokescreen to cover up the revocations that have been put in place.

I do hope that these three issues of fishing, the NLIS and meaningful drought assistance can be taken notice of, in particular with regard to the state drought assistance. I have given the figures for the low uptake of those loans. We need loans that can be taken up by people who are not involved in the livestock industry. In the livestock industry you can get freight subsidy under a drought declaration and you can bring some fodder in that can be helpful. But if you grow grain or horticultural crops and you spend tens of thousands of dollars planting and you get absolutely nothing in return, that is very difficult compared to someone who has been able to keep their herd alive and they have the wherewithal with which to pursue hopefully an income when the seasons change and turn around.

I outlined at the outset the amendments that this bill makes. It is largely a bill to do with machinery matters. The National Party will be supporting this bill.