




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 25 May 2016

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Dairy Farmers

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.47 pm): Today Queensland dairy farmers brought their voices to George Street to say that enough is enough, to say that dairy farmers can no longer accept prices lower than the cost of production, to say to the milk processors and the marketers that if you do not support local Queensland dairy farmers and renew contracts at decent rates we will not have a dairy industry in this state. I want to add my voice to those of the dairy farmers and say unequivocally here today that I stand shoulder to shoulder with them and all the other hardworking dairy farmers around the state on this important issue—as do all my LNP colleagues on this side of the House.

As a Queenslander I want to drink Queensland milk. As the dairy farmers' slogan at the rally today said, 'Do you like your coffee black?' I for one want to see our dairy industry develop so that the next generation of dairy farmers can look forward to a future on the land. My mother and father operated a dairy back in the fifties and sixties and I understand the work that goes into running a dairy. It is a 365-day-a-year job. Rain, hail or sunshine, it does not matter if you are crook, you still have to get up and milk the cows. Whilst we might take for granted that going into a supermarket and buying milk off the shelf is a simple process, I appreciate the work that goes into putting that milk on those shelves. What a disgrace that I can purchase a litre of milk cheaper than a litre of water. Is it any wonder that our dairy farmers are going broke?

There is a growing anger out in the community, and rightly so. We have a shortfall of fresh milk in Queensland. That is right—we actually truck milk into Queensland from interstate to meet our demand. If we do not start supporting our local dairy farmers, this will only get worse. Our dairy farmers have been taken for granted by the big corporates. If our dairy farmers keep leaving the industry at the rate they have, we will not have the option of purchasing local milk.

I want to add my support and acknowledge all those mums and dads out there—all the people in Queensland—who showed their support by only purchasing branded milk at Coles and Woolworths. We have all seen the images on TV and social media of Coles branded milk being left on the shelves and we need to keep up this fight. We need to send these companies a message, and that is, 'If you don't start paying our dairy farmers a fair dinkum price, we will take our business elsewhere.'

I will be talking to the CEOs of Coles and Woolworths later this week to reaffirm our position here today that when contracts are renewed they reflect sustainable returns to our dairy farmers. We have enormous scope to develop our dairy industry here in Queensland and this is being stymied by a ridiculous price war between the corporate giants of the supermarket world, Coles and Woolworths. I say, 'Stop playing games, stop taking our dairy farmers for granted and pay them what they deserve so that we can retain our farmers and develop this industry.'