



Speech By  
**Dale Last**


**MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN**

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Record of Proceedings, 24 August 2017

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

**Sugar Code of Conduct, Disallowance Motion**

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.30 pm): I have stood in this place on a number of occasions and spoken of my support for sugarcane farmers and, in particular, those canefarmers who fall under the umbrella of the Wilmar Sugar Mills. It was with complete dismay that I learnt last week that Senator David Leyonhjelm, in what can only be called a political stunt, moved a disallowance motion in the federal parliament on the Competition and Consumer (Industry Code—Sugar) Regulations 2017, which contains the Sugar Code of Conduct. The fact that this disallowance motion was moved by a senator who has never visited the sugarcane-growing areas of Queensland and whose knowledge of the sugar industry you could chisel on the back of an aspro with a crow bar defies logic.

The purpose of the code is to regulate the conduct of growers, mill owners and marketers of grower economic interest sugar in relation to contracts or agreements for the supply of cane or on-supply of sugar including requiring and providing for precontractual arbitration of the terms of an agreement. It also ensures that supply contracts between growers and mill owners have the effect of guaranteeing a grower's choice of the marketing entity for the grower economic interest sugar manufactured from the cane they supplied. This is the share of exported sugar for which the grower has to bear the price exposure risk.

This code of conduct was introduced to create a level playing field between farmers and millers, setting a framework for a fair process when commercial contract negotiations between grower representatives and large milling companies failed to come to an agreement. The disallowance motion moved by Senator Leyonhjelm, if successful, would be disastrous for the sugar industry in Queensland and take away a vital dispute resolution mechanism that those on this side of the House have fought long and hard for. Not only is the Sugar Code of Conduct under threat by Senator Leyonhjelm's disallowance motion; so is the entire sugar industry in Queensland. This is a sugar industry which only a matter of months ago ended a three-year dispute which tore the heart and soul out of both farmers in this state as well as farmers in my electorate of Burdekin.

This is a senator who lives in NSW and is completely out of touch with how our sugar industry works. Just how out of touch, one might ask? Senator Leyonhjelm has stated—

If they want control over their marketing they always have the option of hiring a truck and sending their crop 300 kilometres down the road to a mill that sells into the socialist collective, if they don't like Wilmar.

These comments are absolute rubbish, because, as anyone who lives in a sugarcane-growing area knows only too well, growers are forced to sell their harvested sugar cane to the closest mill because, once harvested, it is a perishable product.

I am passionate about this industry and not just because of my role as the shadow minister for agriculture. I am passionate about this industry because it holds the livelihoods of many of the hardworking, dedicated constituents in my electorate of Burdekin. Senator Leyonhjelm's actions in moving this disallowance motion are putting those livelihoods at risk. Rest assured I will not be taking a backward step in fighting this ridiculous attempt by Senator Leyonhjelm to repeal the sugar code of conduct.