




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 5 September 2019

MOTION

Dairy Industry, Milk Prices

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (12.40 pm): I rise to support this motion moved by the member for Hill. This government has always been supportive of hardworking primary producers. This is especially so for those in the dairy industry. The dairy industry has been facing tough times in the last few years, with the impact of drought and the flow-on effects to grain prices having increased costs to our intensive livestock industries. It is important to remember that this House has examined our dairy industry in the past. Concerns were raised and the government acted. The Palaszczuk government acted when required to assist the industry and to highlight to the community how to support the local farmers.

On 9 August 2017 the Palaszczuk government announced a funding package of \$960,000 for marketing strategies to help consumers make better informed decisions when they buy milk. The funding will support farmers and assist them and the small, local milk producers and processors to improve their marketing and labelling campaigns. The funding announcement was welcomed by the QDO at the time. As part of the funding package, the Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation was provided with \$550,000 over three years to design and implement a pilot fair milk logo scheme.

We have backed in our support of our farmers through our #eatqld campaign. I encourage those opposite and everyone in the chamber to join this campaign to support our farmers. It is not that hard. Rather than texting backroom deals to bring down the member for Nanango, all members need to do is snap a picture of a Queensland brand of milk or a meal and put it online or on social media. It is so easy, even the member for Gympie could do it! Those opposite have past form in terms of playing politics on this issue and saying the government should do something, yet they are the party of the free market. Are they really calling for market intervention without intervening, or is this more media bites on the run without substance or belief?

The LNP has always been the party of all talk but no action. As a government, we put cash on the table to assist the QDO to develop a logo. Where was the opposition's plan at the time? The LNP has no agricultural policy and no plan for milk. No doubt those opposite will wheel out John Howard at the next election to try and sell the unsellable, the state LNP. When they wheel out the ex-prime minister, they should remember what Howard said about the dairy deregulation at the time. He said—

Do you all want deregulation to happen in a chaotic fashion?

Well, do they? Further, he said—

I understand the pain that is being experienced by people. My comment is that deregulation was going to happen whether we liked it or not.

What has happened is in the past, and no state government can re-regulate as we do not have the constitutional authority. That is why we should assist where we can, as we already have done. By promoting #eatqld we help Queenslanders choose milk and produce that supports Queenslanders and

promotes the good work that supermarkets did in the past in terms of price increases to farmers. Not all milk produced on farms ends up as fresh milk. Some ends up as cheese, yoghurt, cream and other produce, so pricing can be opaque. Pricing and profitability need to be taken into account by the entire sector—farmers, producers, supermarkets and consumers. I put on record my thanks to the supermarkets that assisted producers through difficult times—especially the actions of Woolworths, which showed strong leadership in supporting Queensland producers.

The choice of where people shop and how supermarkets treat our primary producers is in the hands of consumers. I say to those Queenslanders listening to this important debate and those people in the public gallery: make sure you spend your hard-earned dollars at the supermarkets that support our farmers and make sure you get behind the government's social media platform by hashtagging #eatqld, whether it be Queensland milk or food, and support our farmers wherever you are throughout our wonderful state.