



Sid Sidebottom MP ... for a fair go in Braddon

MEDIA RELEASE – 17.9.09

FUTURE OF DAIRY INDUSTRY AT CROSSROADS

DAIRY companies should share the pain and the gain with farmers or risk the entire future of a vital industry says the Federal Member for Braddon Sid Sidebottom MP.

Mr Sidebottom said the plight of dairy farmers and genuine threat to many livelihoods had become all too apparent in recent weeks as poor weather and prices combined for one of the worst periods in many years.

He said he had been in touch with Minister for Agriculture Tony Burke, along with dairy companies and farmer representatives in the past fortnight.

Speaking in Parliament this week Mr Sidebottom said “I am concerned however that the lack of competition in Tasmania may lend itself to greater market variability when compared with other States.

“When massive price distortions occur and long-term contracts are subsequently locked in, there is the real risk that producers will be forced out of the industry.”

Mr Sidebottom agreed with farmer representatives that the issues of market domination and competition laws need to be reviewed as what is happening in the dairy industry could soon be replicated in other sectors.

He said he had written to National Foods about the current Tasmanian situation, and met with processor Fonterra, and had attempted to make it clear that the future of the industry was at a crossroads.

“Farmers seem to be treated as a disposable commodity too often, when ultimately they are the reason everything down the chain in the industry even exists,” he said.

“If they aren’t in a sustainable and rewarding situation then they will eventually move on and down the track the consequences for our State and nation will be dire.

“Companies must realise that sharing the pain and the gain is the only way forward.”

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