



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

ADJOURNMENT

**Braddon Electorate: Promoting
Australian Produce Program**

SPEECH

Tuesday, 26 May 2009

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Sidebottom, Sid, MP

Source House
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Responder
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Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon) (8.34 pm)—Mr Speaker, you will be aware, as are some of my colleagues on this side, that I live in the village of Forth, which was the hometown of Edward Braddon, whom the electorate is named after. I have said many times that Forth has such a fertile soil that if you throw a toenail in the ground it will grow a foot. It is in the Forth Valley itself that we have the Forth based nut producers, Websters Ltd, who can now develop a new marketing initiative—which I would like to highlight tonight—for its product, thanks to a \$212,500 grant from the Rudd government.

The funding comes from our government's Promoting Australian Produce program. This program is all about assisting Australian producers, such as Websters, to promote their product nationally and internationally. Websters Ltd will use the grant to develop a marketing initiative to form a legal entity called Australian Nut Growers, which will serve as a marketing alliance to supply Australian-grown tree nuts to domestic and export markets. Websters Ltd will form the alliance with Nut Producers Australia and Stahmann Farms and focus on the supply of walnuts, almonds, pistachios, pecans and macadamias. This grant will go a long way to helping the north-west nut industry continue to be competitive with its mainland counterparts. The grant, for those interested, is part of nearly \$2 million being delivered across Australia to agricultural and seafood industry organisations in the first round of the Promoting Australian Produce program. Under the program, grant recipients are required to match the funding dollar for dollar. I congratulate Websters Ltd and its associates on matching that \$212,500 from the Rudd government.

Promoting Australian Produce is a three-year, \$5 million program that aims to assist Australian food industries to develop their capacity to promote and market Australian produce more effectively to both domestic and export markets. Under the program, matched-funding grants between \$50,000 and \$750,000 are available for food industry organisations to undertake projects based around one or more of the following activities: enhancing industry marketing and promotional capabilities; developing new strategies for industry marketing;

gaining consumer insights; and strengthening links with domestic and international markets.

As an industry leader, Webster has obviously seen the opportunity to again blaze the trail for its own operation, and others, to increase their competitiveness. Webster Walnuts is Australia's largest commercial walnut grower, currently owning or managing about 2,000 hectares in Tasmania, mainly on the east coast, and in Griffith and Leeton in New South Wales. Webster also owns Australia's only commercial walnut nursery. The nursery is part of Webster's headquarters at my home village of Forth. It is just up the road from my own house and in the heart of one of Australia's most productive farming areas. Webster Fresh is a counterseasonal producer and marketer of a range of vegetable products, primarily onions and carrots, for both the export and domestic markets. Webster's Field Fresh Tasmanian brand has a strong reputation in the competitive world market as a reliable producer and an industry leader in production and product safety. Webster also maintains a strong strategic position in the salmon industry through its 26 per cent ownership of the salmon industry leader, Tassal Group Limited.

The Australian food industry, as our nation's largest manufacturing industry, is a major driver of employment, wealth and prosperity, and that is certainly the case in my electorate, where we specialise in vegetable growing, dairy, beef production, significant horticulture, fishing and a growing viticulture industry. The north-west coast is the food bowl of Tasmania. Australia's and Tasmania's competitive advantage in food production is underpinned by an abundance of arable land that is used to produce a wide range of food commodities across temperate, sub-tropical and tropical agricultural systems.

I applaud Webster for their success in gaining the grant and I also applaud the Rudd government for this program to promote Australian produce. I hope others can also benefit from the Promoting Australian Produce program in this coming financial year.