



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

ADJOURNMENT

Braddon Electorate: Primary Industries

SPEECH

Thursday, 10 September 2009

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Sidebottom, Sid, MP

Source House
Proof Yes
Responder
Question No.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon) (4.55 pm)—I would remind the member for Mayo of his former boss's comments about 'never ever'. I was really pleased on 2 September to have the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry visit my electorate to be involved in two cutting-edge pioneering enterprises. The first was to open a new complex for AgVita Analytical, which has had to expand because of the tremendous demand on its pioneering services. AgVita has been providing services to the agricultural sector in Australia, not just in Tasmania, for over 25 years and it is regarded locally and interstate as the leading laboratory in innovative plant and soil nutrient analysis. AgVita Analytical's key strength is the ability to provide next to real-time testing. Whether samples have been received from the Northern Territory or locally, state-of-the-art precision equipment enables results to be produced the same day that the samples are received. This allows clients to make informed decisions on crop nutrient management. I know that the minister was highly impressed by this ability.

The AgVita offer is unique in the sense that the technical staff work closely with agronomists and farm advisers in interpreting results, offering customised reporting systems as well as training on crop nutrients and soil management. The complex is four times the size of the original laboratory and the company's new headquarters feature leading-edge processing equipment and increased laboratory and testing areas. While the company has always worked with Tasmanian businesses, 70 per cent of its clients are now from other states, with significant growth areas being horticulture and broadacre farming. The new facility will cater for this expansion and provide for enhanced process efficiency and the continued development of new and innovative analytical products. I congratulate Buz Green and all of his team from AgVita Analytical on their pioneering work. I know the minister was highly impressed by their processes.

Mr Speaker, you know the north-west coast very well, having visited it several times now. We travelled further up the coast towards the west and went to McKays Road in Somerset, where Gunns Ltd have their Somerset Nursery. This is an absolutely pioneering type of nursery and is the key to a sustainable future for the Gunns plantation enterprise, which is 200,000 hectares spread across Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales. They

employ 600 contractors in their plantation industry alone and have something like \$28 million worth of equipment. The Somerset seed nursery was set up in 1997. It had an original capacity to develop six million seedlings per year and that has expanded now to 18 million seedlings per annum. In June last year the Somerset Nursery celebrated the growing of its 100 millionth seedling. That is five seedlings for every man, woman and child in Australia. Twenty-eight people work full-time in the Somerset Nursery, where they develop seedlings—particularly eucalypt and pine, but they are working on grapevines as well at the moment.

The whole thing is fully mechanised. There is a waist-high system of processing and that takes the strain off those 28 workers, who are used in a multipurpose way and take up a number of enterprises there. One of the things that they have been developing in trying to control the browsing of animals in plantations is what can only be regarded as a type of net protector for the seedlings. They are trying to cover up 25,000 seedlings per day in nets. They will be able to use that instead of poisons, chemicals or other means to protect their seedlings. All in all, it was a great day. I thank the minister for spending time in Braddon and those enterprises for hosting us.

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 5 pm, the debate is interrupted.