

DRY SEASON TASKFORCE

**226. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Premier:**

I have a supplementary question. What responsibility does the Premier think federal Labor has for this current situation in which farmers have no confidence in there being a market for their sheep?

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please! Premier.

**Mr R.H. COOK replied:**

Madam Speaker, I think I have just gone through a range of programs that people can access, which are sponsored by the commonwealth government. Farmers can have absolute confidence that the federal government will listen to their concerns and respond appropriately. I am not quite sure why the member would politicise an issue such as this. This is something that federal governments on both sides continue to respond —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**Mr R.H. COOK:** This has nothing to do with a live sheep export industry, which continues today.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** You are showing your ignorance, Premier.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** No, you cannot change your argument midstream. The argument to date has been that farmers are destocking because they lack confidence about the future of live animal exports. What the Leader of the Opposition is talking about are the issues they confront with their current livestock. If there are issues to do with their current livestock —

Several members interjected.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** No, just —

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**Mr P.J. Rundle** interjected.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** Just shut up; just be quiet. What the Leader of the Opposition is talking about at the moment is the fact that they feel overstocked because of the current dry conditions. Of course, they have all the industry, as it currently exists, to resolve those issues. I understand that the member is trying to conflate drought-like conditions with the political campaign he is running with live sheep exports, but they do not match up and that is his problem here. This is a problem he has always had. The opposition does not have any policies or values, so they have nothing to fall back on when it comes to issues of this nature.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** This is not a political issue. Commonwealth governments of all persuasions always back our farming industry and back our farmers because they know they are a backbone of our economy. They know that farmers —

**Mr R.S. Love:** That is ridiculous. What a ridiculous statement.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition now says that farmers are not the backbone of our economy. That is the argument he is now making.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members, particularly the opposition; the Premier has made it quite clear that he is not welcoming your interjections. Other members, I would ask you not to respond to those interjections. Given it is a supplementary question, I am hopeful that the Premier may draw his answer to a close.

**Mr R.H. COOK:** I am sorry, Madam Speaker, that those opposite should try to politicise a difficult situation for farmers at the moment. It is time for us to get behind our farming community, to make sure we support them because not only are they doing it a financially, but obviously this will impact on their families, and of course their wellbeing. We are looking at all opportunities to make sure we back them, rather than provide a rank political commentary from the sidelines.