

Question 1 to AgForce Queensland: p. 38 of Proof Hansard

Senator CAMERON—In May 2003, David Kemp and the then Queensland Premier Peter Beattie did a doorstep interview and a question was put to Dr Kemp. The question was:

Dr Kemp, do your National Party colleagues support this proposal?

That was the proposal for joint funding for compensation. Dr Kemp responded:

The proposal is one that has come from the Commonwealth Government as a whole. It's one that the National Party colleagues and the Liberal Party colleagues together presented to the groups this morning. Warren Truss was there, as were two of the other Queensland Commonwealth ministers.

I think one of those ministers was Senator Ian Macdonald. Dr Kemp further stated:

So the Commonwealth is very pleased to be able to put this proposal, which has been developed by Commonwealth and State officials, to the farming community in Queensland.

This was on 22 May, 2003. I assume that AgForce would have been part of that group? You are the pre-eminent group in Queensland. Was AgForce represented at the meeting?

Mr Cotter—I could not confirm that at this stage.

Mr Wagner—I am more than happy to take that question on notice. We will find out those details for you and present that evidence.

Senator CAMERON—Could you also take on notice and provide to the committee any details of public statements made by AgForce arising from that meeting, if you were there. If you were not there, could you advise us why you were not there and, if you were there, could you advise us what took place in the meeting in relation to details of a compensation package?

Mr Cotter—I will take that on notice.

Answer:

Whilst AgForce was invited to many meetings with Government during this period, I can find no evidence to suggest that we were present at this time. Regardless of this there is a difference to being present and actually contributing to the negotiations. AgForce expressed its disappointment at this time about the lack of consultation between all parties.

Question 2: AgForce Queensland - page 43 of Proof Hansard

Senator CAMERON—The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics had a report out around 2003—are you aware of that report?

Mr Wagner—Was that the one on the impacts of productivity?

Senator CAMERON—Yes. That report outlined a whole range of problems, as I understand it, for the farming community, and costs. Were those issues raised by the National Farmers Federation on your behalf, or did you raise those issues on behalf of your members, with either the state or federal government or with any individual Queensland members?

Mr Cotter—I expect it would have been done by my predecessor.

Senator CAMERON—Could you take that on notice and provide information to the committee on that ABARE report and what your position was on that.

Answer:

This issue would have been commented on by AgForce, but in the main dealt with by the National Farmers' Federation due to it coming from a Federal Department.

Question 3: AgForce Queensland – Page 50 of Proof Hansard

Senator IAN MACDONALD—I just want some clarification. Mr Cotter and Mr Wagner, you have indicated that neither of you were involved at the time of negotiations between landowners, their representatives and the state and federal governments—negotiations that were never completed, I might add. A figure of \$150 million was being mentioned but was likely to be increased had negotiations continued. They did not continue, because the Queensland government, without warning to anyone, said, 'We're not talking; we're just going to stop all clearing.' Did the farming community, the landowning community, get any part of \$150 million, or anything else, in compensation?

Mr Cotter—There was \$150 million available for application, which was delivered in maximum amounts of \$100,000. In lots of cases that would have been a very small percentage of the impact that had, there and then—much less in the longer term, both in devaluing and losing production—

Senator IAN MACDONALD—But was it paid?

Mr Cotter—There was \$150 million distributed to landowners in Queensland.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—And do you know on what—

CHAIR—Senator Macdonald, I need to move on.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—Sorry, perhaps take this question on notice: on what basis was it distributed?

Answer:

The compensation was up to \$100,000 per property and was calculated by recognising the area effected, the ratio to the rest of the property, the productive capacity foregone as well as some other factors pertaining to the region/catchment that the property was located in. The compensation was then applied for, assessed through this criteria, and provided as direct grant funds.