



tabled
Nola Marino Milk
8 March 2011

To Nola,

My name is Nikki Slee, and I'm nineteen years old. My whole life I have lived and worked on my family's dairy/beef farm in Yoongarillup, and never once have I regretted being a farm kid. For years I have been told by both friends and family that I work too hard, that I work too many hours. But I've always just accepted this as being part of a farming lifestyle. Farming is not a job to me or my family, it is our lifestyle. Our lives revolve around caring for our stock and doing everything we can to improve our farm business. My dad and I run the dairy, and this is my favourite part of it all. I love working with animals, and I've been working with cattle since I could walk. It comes naturally to me and I enjoy it.

But I'm finding the dairy industry of Western Australia is increasingly unstable. I'm sure you understand what I'm saying when I tell you how little Grade 1 milk is worth, regardless of which company you supply your milk too. Coles and Woolworths are effectively deciding what milk is worth, and putting their prices as low as a dollar a liter. This means that the dairy farmer is the one who takes the hit. We work our backs to the bone twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. There is no real holidays, there's no days off. If something happens, you have to be ready to try and fix it. And for what? We are lucky to get 36 cents per liter for grade 1 milk. (We've never expected to become rich through dairy farming, but we have hoped for a long time to be able to make a decent living.) This isn't fair, Nola. My family supplies Harvey Fresh, and they are doing their best to pay us, but it still isn't enough. They have to be able to compete with Coles and Woolworths, who sell milk under their personal labels, such as 'Homebrand'.

The way things are going, I'm worried that within the next twenty years, there will be no dairy farmers left in Western Australia, simply because we cannot produce milk for as little as we are getting paid for it. I'm sorry if this letter sounds rude in any way, I don't mean it to be as a personal attack on anyone. I'm passionate about being a dairy farmer, and I want to be one for the rest of my (hopefully long) life. With the price of services, machinery, power and water all rising, and how hard it is to be granted a bank loan (let alone pay the interest on it), it is difficult to keep a farm running smoothly at the best of times. But all of this rests on the price of milk, which is being dictated by Coles and Woolworths. I hope there is something you can do to help, and I appreciate you taking the time to read this letter.

Yours Sincerely,

Nikki Slee

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