

**NICK DAMETTO**  
Member for Hinchinbrook

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## MEDIA RELEASE

14/11/2019

### Dametto stands up for dairy farmers

THE Federal Coalition Government has signed a death warrant for Queensland's dairy industry after failing to support a key Bill that would have guaranteed farmers a fair price for their milk, says Hinchinbrook MP Nick Dametto.

Mr Dametto said Katter's Australian Party (KAP) was disgusted by the actions of the Coalition, whose Federal Senators failed to back the Protecting Australian Dairy Bill which would have implemented a minimum price for milk from farm gate to market for farmers.

The result meant the Bill was voted down 31 to 30 in the Senate despite having support from Labor, the Greens and independent senator Jacqui Lambie.

"The actions of Senators from the Liberal Party and especially the National Party were a disgrace in voting against this Bill," Mr Dametto said.

"They effectively abandoned farmers who have been struggling to make ends meet for some time. They cannot sustain their operations given the unsustainable milk price offered to them by the two major supermarkets.

"This is what happens when you deregulate an industry and let corporate greed take over."

Mr Dametto said while Hinchinbrook did not have any dairy farms, the KAP "would always fight for our agricultural industry no matter where it is Queensland".

"Every family needs a farmer and that includes dairy farmers. Queenslanders deserve access to locally produced milk in which a farmer is paid a fair price for their product," he said.

"It's just the right thing to do."

Mr Dametto slammed Nationals Senate leader Bridget McKenzie's refusal to back the Bill, while her government continued to mishandle a proposed dairy code of conduct that had been dragging out for three years.

"Senator McKenzie has shown just how out of touch her party is when she turns her back on a Bill that would have actually helped farmers, while the Nationals dither on a code of conduct for the industry for three years," Mr Dametto said.

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"And now we hear from Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation president Brian Tessmann in the media this week that the proposed code as it is now written would be worse than doing nothing at all and in actual fact gives more power to the milk processors. What a debacle."

In the last Queensland Parliament, Hill MP Shane Knuth attempted to introduce the Sustainable Queensland Dairy Production (Fair Milk Price Logos) Bill 2016, which would have established logos for containers of fresh milk produced in particular regions and for which fair prices have been paid to dairy farmers and created a mechanism for setting fair prices with offences for particular conduct in relation to the logos.

Despite being endorsed by the dairy industry, the Bill was defeated in parliament by Labor and the LNP, as was a similar attempt in 2013.

During a sitting of Queensland Parliament in Townsville in September, Mr Dametto supported a successful motion by Mr Knuth in which the House supported the immediate introduction of a 10 cent per litre levy on the price of all milk sold in all supermarkets to be passed back to dairy farmers that produced the milk in support of Queensland's dairy industry and called on all supermarkets to immediately pass on all of any recent additional price increases and future price increases to all milk product sold, distributed evenly to dairy farmers, processors and supermarkets in Queensland.

"Despite passing, the motion has been ignored at a State level while dairy farmers continue to suffer, particularly on the Atherton Tablelands," Mr Dametto said.

"The State and Federal governments have abandoned the bush, plain and simple."

In his speech supporting the motion, Mr Dametto painted a bleak picture of an industry in crisis.

"In 2010, when the dairy industry was deregulated, Queensland had 1500 dairy farmers. There are now 340 dairy farmers. That means there are fewer people living in rural and regional Queensland," he said.

"Deregulation has seen the collapse of this industry. It is currently on its knees and screaming for help. The supermarkets have said, 'We have responded.' Some 130,000 people signed a petition. The supermarkets have said, 'We have done the wrong thing by farmers who are struggling. We will up the price by 10 per cent.' We see that only two per cent of that price increase was fed back to farming communities.

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"People have given up and decided that whatever they have done for generations is not good enough anymore, because of the market price set not by the consumer but by the purchaser of their milk who then markets it.

"On current trends, in 10 years time, there are likely to be zero dairy farmers in Queensland."

Earlier this month, Tablelands Regional Council mayor Joe Paronella wrote to Mr Dametto seeking his support for the region's dairy industry, which is on the brink of collapse.

Mr Dametto responded saying he agreed with all of the actions suggested by Cr Paronella to save the Tablelands dairy industry, including the introduction of a fair base price for milk from farm gate to cover actual production cost and an emergency crisis relief package to support North Queensland dairy farmers to remain viable.

"One of the reasons KAP leader Bob Katter left the National Party was because of the deregulation of the dairy industry and now we are seeing the results of this destructive policy playing out as dairy farmers go to the wall on a weekly basis," Mr Dametto said.

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### Media Enquiries

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