

Hunt Partners

From: Rosemary Mort [rosem2@optusnet.com.au]
Sent: Saturday, 14 November 2009 11:54 AM
To: 'Hunt Partners'
Subject: revised release

Thanks for your help on this Norman – cheers Rosemary

Richard Torbay

Speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly

Member for Northern Tablelands

Media Release

Friday, November 13, 2009

Beef labeling Bill passes Lower House despite RMAC backflip

Despite last minute stalling tactics from the Red Meat Advisory Council (RMAC), the Bill to ensure truth in beef product labeling was passed unanimously in the NSW Lower House yesterday.

Member for Northern Tablelands Richard Torbay who has guided the legislation since it was first introduced almost 12 months ago said he will now work with Upper House members to ensure the Bill is supported when put to the vote in the Legislative Council.

He expressed disquiet at RMAC tactics to renege on an earlier agreement to back the legislation and its attempt to lobby MPs to withdraw their support on the day the Bill was to be presented.

“Consumers, producers and the majority of the industry representative bodies are overwhelmingly in favour of this legislation,” Mr Torbay said. “Some amendments were negotiated over the last 11 months and RMAC representatives were part of those negotiations. Their about face on their earlier agreements demonstrates a disappointing lack of leadership.”

The MP said the purpose of the Bill was to provide consistent and reliable labeling of beef products for consumers which is expected to boost domestic consumption levels.

“The system as it now stands has no teeth,” he said. “Consumers can buy an excellent product one week and the next week buy what they assume is the same quality under the same label and find it is tough and tasteless.”

“The legislation requires that all beef products using the agreed labeling system meet the criteria. Those who mislabel inferior beef and transgress the system will face very substantial fines.”

Mr Torbay said the new system would still be voluntary and consumers would be informed through an education campaign about what to expect from the stricter labeling regime.

“Consumption of beef on the domestic market has been falling for some years and much of this decline is attributed to an unreliable labeling system,” he pointed out. “At present our beef exports are falling quite dramatically and there is greater reliance on a buoyant domestic market.”

“Guiding these necessary reforms has required a painstaking process of negotiations. But if, as is expected, it results in a better deal for consumers, producers and the industry it will be a very worthwhile outcome.” **Further information Richard Torbay (02) 6772 5552/ 0427 635 029**

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