



### FARMING EQUIPMENT

Mr PICCOLO (Light) (14:25): Today I rise to raise a couple of matters dealing with the rural part of my electorate. On Tuesday I raised a matter of concern relating to the urban (or southern) parts of my electorate, and today I would like to bring to the house's attention some issues which affect the rural parts of my electorate.

I understand that the matters I will raise today have also been raised with the member for Hammond, and I acknowledge that he and I are working on these issues together. I understand that he has constituents in his electorate with problems similar, if not identical, to those experienced by my constituents.

For the purposes of the discussion today, I do not intend to name the parties involved in the various disputes as some of them are currently working with the South Australian Farmers Federation in order to mediate a resolution. However, the issue is sufficiently important to justify a preliminary report to this house.

Farmers are having considerable difficulty in getting machinery manufacturers to undertake repairs to machinery that is under warranty. While the initial problem may be covered by warranty, the problem often continues when it is outside of warranty and manufacturers are then refusing to undertake further work.

Two problems arise from this. First, there is the cost of repairs. In my constituent's case, he has spent more money on repairs to his machinery than the original cost of the piece of machinery. The second and more important problem—and I am sure the member for Hammond would agree—is the loss of productivity when machinery cannot be used.

To help fund the cost of machinery, farmers often do a lot of contract work with their machines to recover some of the cost. So, when the equipment or machinery is down, because of the seasonal nature of a lot of the work, they lose a lot of work. In fact, my constituent has estimated that the cost to him, through both the repairs to the machinery (which is the subject of complaint) and also the loss of productivity, is about \$1 million. You can see the impact that these problems have on our farmers.

The other issue relates to the safety concerns raised from machinery and equipment that is faulty and where the manufacturer refuses to take the necessary action. In the case of my constituent, it has been alleged and supported by an independent safety report that the faulty machinery could result in lives being put at risk. There is some comment in the community that some serious incidents have already occurred as a result of machinery not having been repaired properly.

It has been put to me—and my initial inquiries appear to substantiate it—that manufacturers would rather fight the matter in court than address the substantive issues involved. Many farmers have clocked up huge legal costs in trying to have the matter addressed. Farmers often have to capitulate to the manufacturers because they cannot afford the legal bills. In my initial dealings with one of the manufacturers, they were quite belligerent and even questioned my right to advocate on behalf of my constituent. Whilst they have become a little more conciliatory in recent times, I can see why this firm has earned a reputation of being a bit of a corporate bully.

At this stage, I am not clear whether the problem lies with the manufacturers in Australia, their parent company overseas or the individual machinery retailers. I am hoping to hear from more farmers so that I can get a better understanding of the depth and scope of the problem and make a decision about the best way to progress this matter to ensure a just outcome for farmers. If the problem is widespread, as I suspect it is, some type of parliamentary inquiry may be required in order to bring the issue into the open.

I am suggesting a parliamentary inquiry so that farmers can tell their story without the fear of legal action, because this is a tactic which the manufacturers appear keen to utilise at the first opportunity. A parliamentary inquiry would assess whether existing laws provide farmers with sufficient protection and whether there are sufficient avenues to have their grievances resolved.

Time expired.