



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

9 October 1983

The National Party has threatened the future of the Queensland sugar industry with its support for the growing of sugar in the Ord River region.

Any plan to grow sugar on the Ord could only damage the Queensland sugar industry and the Federal Government is firmly opposed to the concept.

However, the Member for Dawson, Mr Braithwaite, and Opposition Spokesman on Northern Development, is firmly on the record as a supporter of Ord sugar development.

In the West Australian Daily News of 2 August he is reported as having said that sugar can be grown successfully in the Ord River dam region and that growers should get an export licence.

In the West Australian the next day, he is reported as having said that if the Australian sugar industry needed to expand, Queensland had to acknowledge that Kununurra must fit into that situation.

My Government is totally opposed to growing sugar on the Ord, because it can only harm the industry in Queensland.

If Mr Braithwaite was looking after the sugar industry in this State, as he is supposed to be, then he should be opposed to any sugar growing on the Ord.

The Federal Government will also not be implementing the disastrous recommendations contained in the IAC's draft report on the sugar industry.

Our position could not be stronger or clearer.

Both my colleague, Primary Industry Minister John Kerin, and I have repeatedly given that assurance to the sugar industry.

But it appears that the National Party is determined to misrepresent the Government's position.

The Queensland Primary Industry Minister and Mr Braithwaite have both falsely claimed that we are going to implement the recommendations contained in that draft report.

I demand that in the interests of the great sugar industry in this State that both of these men cease their scaremongering and misrepresentations.

They will only succeed in hurting the sugar industry which they are supposed to support and represent if they keep it up.

I am also most concerned at the way in which the National Party is behaving towards the sugar industry.

The Federal Government has provided \$10 million to assist growers in difficulties which is being administered by the Queensland Government.

But I understand that only about \$2 million of that money has gone to farmers in need.

My colleague, John Kerin, will be asking the Queensland Government to keep me fully informed of the situation and asking the Queensland Government to ensure that any grower making an application gets sympathetic consideration.

The Fraser/Anthony Government did nothing for the sugar industry except to commission an IAC report which, fortunately, came to us.

CAIRNS