

Unlucky beef dip

MEAT and Livestock Australia's (MLA) David Thomason's colourful statement ("Beef label Bill gets served", *The Land*, October 22, p9) that Richard Torbay's meat labelling bill "could set the industry back 20 years" would be amusing if it was not so sadly misplaced.

First, 20 years ago Australians each ate 43.2 kilograms of beef every year.

When Meat Standards Australia (MSA) was launched in 1998, Australians ate 38kg annually.

Ten years and \$75 million plus expenditure on MSA later, MLA has forecast that each Australian will eat 31.3kg of beef in 2009 and an average of 33.2kg during the next five years.

Last financial year the total volume of beef consumed here

fell by almost seven per cent as domestic consumption dropped to 33pc of production.

Meanwhile, cattle producers now receive 27.7pc less in real terms for their cattle than they did 20 years ago.

Mr Torbay's grading model, based upon a model developed by David Thomason and Aus-Meat in 2005, encourages the continued uptake of MSA, with the top grade being restricted to MSA five- and four-star and the surest way of making the next best grade being through MSA three-star.

Only 12,500 of 160,000 cattle properties in Australia are MSA accredited and, as Mr Thomason has previously pointed out, cattle from northern Queensland, the Channel Country, the Northern Territory and cattle sold through saleyards will often make good eating but can't be MSA graded because of the 24-hour transport rules.

The challenge facing the industry is how to fill the gap between the existing MSA grades

and the budget beef end, so consumers know the quality of the beef before they decide to buy.

Currently consumers are being asked to enter into a lucky dip, buying good steak one week and a

tough and tasteless beef the next. That means they are less likely to come back for repeat purchases.

NORMAN HUNT,
Hunt Partners,
Sydney.

PARTING SHOTS

Beware Bob's law

I REFER to Senator Bob Brown's television extravaganza on the steps of the Opera House last weekend proclaiming the Greens' aim is to lower atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide from 385 parts per million to 350ppm.

Senator Brown has had an expensive medical education and should be aware of Henry's Law (a gas solubility law. See www.bosmin.com/Henryslaw for science details).

The import of his announcement is that he would have to lower the average sea temperature 0.25 degrees Celsius to get to 350ppm.

Once he and his gaggle of adoring supporters has figured out how that can be done, they will have earned my undying support.

BOB BEATTY,
Camira, Qld.

Gutless oil grab

OIL is now worth about \$70 a barrel and the Aussie dollar has soared to around US92 cents.

Early this month and we were paying \$1.26 and \$1.30 litre at the bowser for unleaded fuel. Boy, do we need a government with some guts.

PETER WALKLEY,
Wauchope.