




Speech by

Ian Rickuss

MEMBER FOR LOCKYER

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GATTON RESEARCH STATION; HORTICULTURE INDUSTRY; IPSWICH TERTIARY HOSPITAL

 **Mr RICKUSS** (Lockyer—LNP) (9.10 pm): Last week Minister McVeigh visited my electorate. It was a resounding success. Minister McVeigh called in at the Gatton Research Station where a lot of horticulture research is carried out and spoke to the staff. The response he got from the staff was quite pleasing. He did highlight the fact that when the Labor government took over the reins of the state some 20-odd years ago there were over 6,000 people working for the Department of Primary Industries and there is now less than 3,000—job cuts, job cuts, job cuts.

A government member: Shame!

Mr RICKUSS: It is a shame, that is right. We also visited the biosecurity facilities at Helidon. It is on the wrong side of the highway. Every truck has to cross the highway to get to that biosecurity facility. We are in discussions with the department about how we can manage that system better.

I would also like to comment on HAL, the funding body for horticulture in Queensland. Ausveg, Growcom and the researchers need to get together to make sure that they receive their fair share of horticultural research money. That is what we need to grow this economy. Being one of the pillars of the LNP's economy, horticulture is a major employer. Six of the big growers in my area employ well over 200 people.

Mrs Menkens: I have some of them, too.

Mr RICKUSS: That is right, some of the big growers from the Lockyer Valley even spread up into the Burdekin. They go right down to Geelong as well. The biggest growers probably employ 500 people. Horticulture is a major employer of people. It is a lot of hands on. Every day that you turn up at Woolworths, Coles or the local greengrocer the produce has been harvested and cared for by people like my growers in the Lockyer Valley who start work before daylight. A lot of the process happens very early in the morning.

I had a meeting during the week about a tertiary hospital in Ipswich. It was an interesting meeting. It will take 10 years of planning to get a hospital of this calibre in place but I think the time to start is now. I am sure that the member for Ipswich would agree with me that now is the time to start to implement the plans. We will make sure this plan gets driven properly through the processes and the boards that are being implemented in health. It will be a great plan that will support Queensland well into the future.