




Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

MOTION: ETHANOL

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (6.21 pm): I rise to speak to the amended motion. My comments will echo directly the missive from the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and member for Toowoomba South. The LNP Newman government has unequivocally made agriculture one of the four pillars of the Queensland economy. The LNP government recognises the tremendous contribution that agriculture makes to Queensland and the \$1.15 billion per year contribution that our sugar industry makes to our economy with our growers and our mills accounting for more than 95 per cent of national sugar production.

Unlike the member for Condamine and the party that he now represents, the LNP does not grab at simplistic solutions. We do not run around offering false hope for our major industries, particularly the sugar industry, the backbone of our coastal regional economies. We do not believe that by simply legislating a mandate all will be fixed and that we will generate more demand and more income for our regional communities. The LNP is committed to sensible, practical policies and solutions that will deliver in the long term for our agricultural industries. Our sugar industry will recognise, as I do, that the member for Condamine and his Katter colleagues and the almost-born 'Puppy' party run by one Clive Palmer seeking a distraction from the financial operations of his mining interests are only interested in headline grabbing in the run-up to the federal election. The sugar industry knows that it is the LNP that is delivering solid support for the industry, with \$4.6 million over four years for industry research and development to give the industry what it needs—help in generating higher yields, increased productivity and greater efficiencies. That is what is important for our sugar industry.

The LNP is also helping with cutting red tape and assisting farmers with its common-sense changes to the vegetation legislation. I will not say anything further about the bill that is currently before the House, but I am sure members will recognise that the LNP is well and truly on the way to recognising the importance of all sectors of our agricultural industry through amendments to the Vegetation Management Act. Our farmers and our rural communities know that it is the LNP that is delivering the policies and initiatives that they need—real policies that make sense, not simplistic nonsense, simplistic policies that are never fully consulted and certainly never fully costed.

The member for Condamine really needs to start talking to people in his own backyard—talking to producers and major industries in his own backyard, in his electorate—because I am absolutely sure that the very last thing they would be wishing for is increased competition for grain based feedstock generated by an ill-conceived policy that resulted in this country having to import more ethanol from Brazil and the US. The people of the electorate of Condamine and the people of Queensland know that with the LNP government they will get practical, common-sense policies that are developed after full consultation—policies that are fully costed, policies that will provide genuine benefits for our agricultural industries and the communities they support. I am sure the people of the Condamine electorate will look forward to returning to a sensible, considered and practical LNP representative at the next election.

We have before the House a simple grab for a headline by the members who are sometimes in the Katter party, maybe in the Palmer party, and we do not know what other parties will come up with headline-grabbing initiatives at the last moment. They are ill-considered, ill-thought-out and not possible in the current economic climate. However, the LNP will support our agricultural industry and, importantly, recognise that our agricultural industry is one of the major economic drivers of Queensland's economy. As members have heard already in this House, cattle producers will be supported but sugar producers will also be supported, as will people involved in the grain industry and those folk who may be enthused by the prospect of an ethanol mandate being the answer to all their prayers. We will support them in every way and give them every opportunity to return agriculture, as a pillar of the Queensland economy, to its rightful No. 1 position.

(Time expired)

Amendment agreed to.

Question put—That the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Motion, as agreed—

That this House:

- notes the economic importance of the Queensland sugar industry and that the Newman government has recognised agriculture as one of the four pillars of the state's economy;
- notes the former Labor government broke its 2006 election commitment to implement an ethanol mandate in Queensland;
- notes the Commonwealth fuel excise of 38.143 c per litre is a more effective support for the domestic ethanol industry than a mandate; and
- endorses the Newman government's support for the sugar industry including \$4.6 million over four years for industry research, development and extension, investigation of the transfer of SunWater channel schemes to local irrigators and reforms to vegetation management to support sustainable food production.