




Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**

**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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**PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

**Burnett Electorate, Agriculture**

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (3.49 pm): I rise to share with the House the significant reforms of this government, providing a new era of productivity for Queensland farmers. It is important to acknowledge the hard work already done in relation to agriculture. For regional Queensland, Ergon receives a significant community service obligation payment from government to enable it to supply electricity to regional areas at a reasonable price. This cost is estimated in 2014-15 to increase to \$700 million. In addition, local irrigators have been given the opportunity to take part in local management reviews of Queensland's irrigation schemes. This is about giving organisations like the Bundaberg Regional Irrigators Group an opportunity to demonstrate how these schemes could be transferred to viable, long-term local entities.

I want to highlight the practical reforms that have been introduced to assist the farming sector in my electorate—practical reforms to Queensland's vegetation management framework passed in state parliament this week, restoring the balance to vegetation laws and marking the end of years of neglect of the agricultural sector. These new vegetation management laws represent the most significant reforms to legislation affecting the rural sector in decades and mark the beginning of a new era of agricultural production in Queensland. Landowners will save time and money with the introduction of self-assessable codes and routine vegetation management such as weed and pest management. The completed land audit shows that the Newman government was right to make agriculture one of its four pillars of the economy. The audit will provide a range of useful information to help investors and farmers and to guide regional local planning in our state. It has been 30 years since an equivalent study of this nature has been undertaken. This government will assist local farmers and landowners affected by flooding. Growers will be able to benefit from \$20 million for an on-farm productivity and riparian recovery program to deliver practical on-ground solutions to repair damage and better prepare for future events. The government's fight for the full category D assistance package accelerated the recovery process for local farmers and growers. This announcement will help keep the resilience for which cane growers are known. They want to get on with the recovery as quickly as possible so they can get back to the business of growing cane.

The establishment of a stand-alone agriculture department has seen significant advances. The investment in sugar industry research and development is further evidence that this government is committed to the Bundaberg region's families and the industry. Additional biosecurity officers and recovery officers are some of the many reforms implemented to assist the farming families in my electorate. As always, we are happy to work with the Bundaberg and Isis cane growers in our area, and of course the Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers provide an important part of the gross domestic product for my region. With that, I assure the cane growers and the growers of the Bundaberg regional area that we are here to help and that the government is doing significant work with reforms to ensure agriculture is one of the four pillars of this government and will continue to be very important in the future.