




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 28 August 2014

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Transport Regulations, National Reforms

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (3.50 pm): I wish to share with the House the implications of the national reforms to transport regulations which have resulted in changes to permit processes for farmers and transport operators who operate in sugarcane and grain industries. The new process has taken the permit-issuing authority away from local police and centralised the permit-issuing authority in Brisbane.

In the Burnett electorate this has resulted in the locking out of the sugarcane industry from the local road network by not allowing the movement of farm equipment over 3.5 metres wide on critical major roads even to cross critical and major roads or to travel on minor roads. The new obligations requiring police escorts are simply unrealistic. Higher regulatory obligations on both the farming community and transport operators who service the industry during the harvest season threaten the productivity and profitability of the sugarcane and agricultural sectors state-wide. Farmers, harvest operators and transport contractors must be allowed to travel on local road networks during critical times of the year.

Industry and stakeholders have attended a series of crisis meetings with the Department of Transport and Queensland police to resolve the issue. Negotiations between canegrowers and the Department of Transport have seen some progress in efforts to resolve the issue of valid permits for the movement of farm machinery and harvest equipment. All permits issued by Queensland police after 10 February 2014 are understood to be invalid, and future permits will be issued under national laws by the Queensland government. This has left growers and contractors exposed to potential liability in the event of an incident and unwittingly in default of existing transport negotiations. There is a clear need for the needs of Queensland police and the Department of Transport to be addressed, particularly around escorts, safety and the issue of access across or on major roads like the Bruce Highway.

In acknowledging our local Bundaberg Regional Council, the minister and the great staff, there appears to be some agreement that TMR will issue a group permit this month to allow the growers to move farm machinery and harvest equipment for the 2014 season. Permit lengths will need to be increased from three months to between six to 12 months to avoid the need for reapplication of permits. Crossing of, and driving on, critical and main roads is an issue being examined to assist growers who need to shift equipment short distances or to cross roads between properties. For the benefit of the House I table maps highlighting the critical areas of roads in Queensland to which I am referring.

Tabled paper: Transport and Main Roads map: critical areas and roads in Queensland, June 2011 [[5797](#)].

We need to be allowed to move on or over major roads like the Bruce Highway without complying strictly with the regulations. We need the regulations changed. These practices need to be allowed to continue as they have previously under police permits. This would save growers significant costs and would save the need for double piloting or for police to be present to merely cross a road.