




Speech By  
**Deb Frecklington**

**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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**MOTION OF CONFIDENCE**

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (5.36 pm): I rise in this House tonight to speak against the confidence motion put forward by the Premier. Firstly, I congratulate the Premier on her rise to such great office. I congratulate also the Deputy Premier, the Treasurer, the ministry and all of the new members in this House. I congratulate one of our new members, the member for Gregory, Lachie Millar, who stood in this House today and made a fantastic maiden speech. I congratulate him on his passion for his electorate and his family. The member for Gregory followed exactly the convention for a maiden speech in this House—that is, to thank his electorate, the people who put him in this place. I would also like to congratulate you, Mr Speaker, and, through you, all of the deputy speakers.

Today gives all members in this House a right to speak on why this government does not have the confidence of Queenslanders. This 55th Parliament has no clear majority. The power to govern this state by way of supply and confidence sits with the crossbenchers. We in the LNP acknowledge we have made mistakes. On 31 January more than 100,000 Queenslanders put the LNP first. It is simple mathematics. Labor does not have the clear support of Queenslanders and therefore should not have the clear support of this House.

I turn to this motion of confidence. Before anyone in this House can make a reasoned decision, we need to look at Labor's track record in government. Should Queenslanders be subjected to the past of debt and deficit or, most horribly, the way that all previous Labor governments have ripped the backside out of the bush? The day after the election, a constituent of mine, a good old bushie, said to me, 'It's not the fact of Labor being in power that upsets me; it's the fact that they not only take everything from us in the bush, but they kick the living daylight out of us while we are down and set our regional economies back even further.' I cannot have confidence in this government, I cannot have confidence that this government will look after my electorate and I cannot have confidence that this government will work towards a better Queensland.

During previous successive Labor governments, the electorate of Nanango suffered greatly. During the terms of previous Labor governments, Nanango kept getting pushed to the bottom of the pile, which is interesting given that for many years an Independent member represented the seat. When it came to infrastructure spending, vital road upgrades were completely neglected. Today we hear that the government is looking at recruiting fewer nurses. I bet those numbers come from the bush as well and I hear that there will be a delay in delivering maternity services back to Ingham. Go figure!

In the three years that we were in government there was a return to a renewed state of economic vigour and confidence with sound policies and reasoned economic management. Most importantly, we governed for all of Queensland. History tells us that no Labor government will ever be remembered for sound economic management. No Labor government has ever been able to prove that it understood the regions and looked to the future to ensure that our children would not be saddled with massive debt. It was the Borbidge-Sheldon LNP government that left this state with a

zero net debt. The Bligh-Beattie Labor government left this state with \$80 billion worth of debt. History tells us that Labor is great at selling ideologies, but when it comes to the administration of those ideologies it is simply unable to perform in the best interests of all Queenslanders.

I turn to my shadow portfolio of agriculture, fisheries and forestry. I look forward to that challenge, as I believe that the portfolio of agriculture, fisheries and forestry is one of the most important industries for the future of not only Queensland's economy but also Australia's economy. Agriculture and fresh food are vital for all people and, as such, this department should be recognised. History tells us that Labor governments do not understand its importance. I congratulate my great friend and the former minister for agriculture, the Hon. Dr John McVeigh, for the massive undertaking of re-establishing the department of agriculture after it was completely dismantled by former Labor governments. For many years under Labor, agriculture, fisheries and forestry were buried in the bowels of big super departments such as DEEDI and DNRM. They were left in the wilderness and given absolutely no direction or focus. Primary producers felt that impact and knew that their issues were of little consequence to a Labor government that had simply forgotten about them.

Primary production has and will always be a major focus and a priority for our side of the House. We pledge to double agricultural production by 2040, producing an agricultural strategy that outlines our plans for this goal. In July 2014 Dr John McVeigh held the inaugural agricultural conference and released the first ever State of Queensland agriculture report. We established industry round tables for beef, grains, dairy, horticulture and agricultural skills. This helped us work closer with industry to address the issues, work through options together and agree on actions. In contrast, up until the election Labor did not even have a policy on agriculture, fisheries and forestry, which they have taken off their title. They produced a food and fibre policy during the campaign that failed to even mention the word 'cattle'. Go figure! It is one of Queensland's biggest industries. Their fishing policy was released just days before the election itself, giving the community little time to know—

**A government member** interjected.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Members opposite may laugh about the agricultural industry, but I do not. It is a very important industry for this state. I will come back to the fishing policy in a moment.

When the LNP government reinstated the department of agriculture, we also committed to delivering stronger front-line services that were focused on people in the field who work directly with our primary producers. They are not sitting here in George Street; they are actually working in the bush. Those people work across all the regions and include new wild dog officers, tick control officers, crocodile protection officers, biosecurity field staff, agronomists, horticulturalists, fisheries officers and technical officers. All of that was done to help our primary producers do what they do best.

I will touch on the insensitive comments of the Minister for Agriculture in relation to the banana issue that exists in and around North Queensland. Our government passed the desperately needed new Biosecurity Act to modernise the laws. It was well overdue. The act replaced six acts to safeguard not only our agricultural businesses but also the environment and our Queensland lifestyle. Other states are now taking the lead in biosecurity. Another primary example of red-tape reduction was the common-sense changes we made to help our primary producers with regard to the vegetation management laws. After years of Big Brother looking over their shoulders, one could almost literally hear the collective sigh of relief from our farmers when self-assessable codes were introduced.

Labor's over-the-top laws had a disastrous and negative impact on our farmers. I am extremely concerned that it has again campaigned on repealing that most important change, which was made to assist this vital industry in Queensland. It would be an example of bringing in change for change's sake, just to keep the city based Greens happy. Labor's proposed changes will mean that Queensland will see a return to unnecessary and burdensome administrative regulatory requirements for landholders in the day-to-day management of their properties for no environmental gain at all. Already Labor members are trying to pull the wool over the eyes of everyone in the bush, saying that they will consult and they will listen and they will not make changes immediately. I urge industry, the crossbenchers and Mr Speaker to see through that smokescreen, because before we know it we will be back to the days when we did not even have a department of agriculture.

While speaking of the bad old days, I bring the attention of the House to comments made by the new Minister for Agriculture in relation to the live cattle sector. In just his second week in the role he confirmed that he would not support the live cattle trade. It is a desperate worry that the

Queensland Minister for Agriculture can make those statements. It is a desperate worry that he does not understand that the type of stock that goes to live trade is different to the type of animal that enters the processing market. That is astonishing given the disastrous results of the former federal Labor government's live trade ban and the massive negative impact it had, not just on beef producers in North Queensland but also on beef producers all the way down to Kilcoy.

I mention the following point, as it might be interesting for the minister to read this speech: live cattle export volumes provide a definite indication of how vitally important this market is to Queensland's primary producers. So far this year, the volumes of cattle shipped out of Townsville have outstripped the volumes shipped out of Darwin for the same period—that is, January and February—and it looks like they will also beat last year's financial year volumes. This government has not and will not consult with the industry around this issue. Port Alma could yet provide another market for our beef cattle producers, especially those in the southern regions of Queensland who historically have not been able to access this market at all.

It also provides an important market for our primary producers in drought-stricken areas of Queensland. I acknowledge the many hundreds of thousands of acres of Queensland that are still drought stricken. I acknowledge the member for Gregory for the passion with which he spoke about his electorate, because from years gone past I know that this drought is a natural disaster and the people there are hurting desperately. I thank the member for inviting me out there to see it firsthand.

I turn to the issue of fisheries. Our commercial fishing industry is already at risk due to this new government. This industry is vital to the Queensland economy, but more importantly vital to our coastal towns. I note the member for Burnett is in the chamber. It is vitally important to towns like Bundaberg.

In March 2014 we announced a wide-ranging review of fisheries management. The review was a chance to modernise the way that fisheries were managed to ensure the future of the resource and the community benefits of commercial and recreational fishing in Queensland.

Those opposite have only been in government for about eight weeks and they have already attempted to close this industry down. I have heard a lot about consultation from government members. This is one industry that has not been consulted. There has been no consultation. If anyone in this House wants a prime example of how this government will ram through its policy changes saying one and doing another, one cannot go past the way they have refused to deal with the commercial fishers of Queensland.

The president of QSIA, Karen Collard, and numerous other industry groups have asked many times to meet with the minister. He has refused to meet personally with this industry group, the Queensland Seafood Industry Association. It represents the majority of commercial fishers in this state.

It beggars belief that this group is unable to meet with the minister. The suggestion was that they go to community cabinet. Everyone who wants to meet with a minister can sit on the floor at community cabinet and ask a question. Guess what? Karen Collard, the president of QSIA, has been told that because she did not get her form in by 18 March she is not able to attend the community cabinet in Rockhampton this weekend. I urge the Minister for Agriculture to meet with the industry and consult before they turn—

**A government member:** Townsville.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I apologise. I stand corrected. It will be in Townsville.

**Mr Hinchliffe:** At least you took that interjection.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I am happy to take that interjection. It will be in Townsville.

**Mr Costigan:** It could be on the moon—meet with her.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Exactly. The contrast is stark. Our government had extensive consultation with industry. Those opposite are causing much anxiety in this industry. I plead with the minister to change his mind and agree to meet. When on radio in Rockhampton it was put to him, 'Have you spoken to commercial fishermen in that area? Have you sat down and had a meeting with them?' He replied, 'That is occurring as we speak. The department, our government officials, are at this moment engaging.' So what is he saying? Who has he actually consulted with? We hear a lot that they are going to consult, but not in this vital industry.

In the time left I need to turn to look at our education and agricultural colleges. Working alongside our plan to double agricultural production our government knew that we needed an agricultural workforce armed with the relevant skills to meet industry demands. To this end, we developed a blueprint which identifies a range of actions, including increasing awareness of agriculture as a career and ensuring we have high-quality teachers of agricultural subjects that meet the current and emerging needs of the sector.

As I have gone around the state in the last three years, I have seen that the bush is still screaming out and hurting over the closure by the previous Labor government of the great agricultural colleges at Dalby and Mareeba and the mothballing of the one in Burdekin. Our government, to the contrary, reinvigorated both the Longreach pastoral and Emerald agricultural colleges. Dr John McVeigh re-established the Toogoolawah high school in my electorate as an agricultural high school. I thank him very much for that. The students of Toogoolawah high school very much thank him as well.

For our farmers already on the ground we partnered with industry to rollout best management practice programs. We developed effective partnerships with regional NRM bodies, industry and producers to deliver BMP programs for the grazing, sugar, grains and cotton industries. I want to assure my colleagues and crossbenchers that in taking on this role I will be striving to provide our farmers and fishers with strong representation. I will continue to highlight the issues which are important to our primary producers and families.

With all of this said, there is one statement that really does confirm my lack of confidence in this government. In their policy document released in the dying days of the election campaign, Labor stated that the LNP only thinks about behind the farm gate. I have never read a more ridiculous statement in my life. That statement is highly offensive. It is offensive to the thousands of farmers and primary producers and their families who produce food each and every day. LNP members make no apology for having only the highest regard for and for considering the people behind the farm gate first and foremost. These are people who actually produce our food and fibre. These are the people who are producing some of the highest quality food and materials in the world—right here in our own backyard.

They put food on our tables and clothes on our backs. So the next time members are tucking into a fantastic steak, a pork roast or a mud crab, adding blueberries, bananas or mangoes to their fresh yoghurt, think of our primary producers who work so hard, mostly against the odds, every day to make this possible for us. These people need our support to get on with the job.

This Labor government does not have any policies that are fully costed and they do not have a clear plan. They certainly do not have any clear plan for agricultural industries. We just heard that when listening to the minister who took about 12 minutes to even mention the world agriculture. I am also extremely distressed that the Royalties for the Regions program has been cut in half because without a doubt this was one program that benefited the bush. I have no confidence in this government.