




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Agriculture and Environment Committee, Report

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (7.35 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker, could I have your indulgence to acknowledge my beautiful family sitting in the gallery: my husband, Jason, and three daughters, Elke, Isabella and Lucy. It is wonderful to have them here. Let us hope that the future of the agricultural industry is sitting in one of those three up there. That would be lovely.

Tonight I rise to speak to the estimates process. I would like to thank the committee, in particular the chair, for giving me the indulgence of being able to attend and sit on that committee. I would like to congratulate the LNP members on that committee, particularly the deputy chair, Stephen Bennett, and also Ted Sorensen, the member for Hervey Bay. It is very good to be able to take the opportunity that is afforded to us in opposition to question the government and, in this case, the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Sport and Racing, but not forestry. I had an opportunity to ask the minister what he did with the 'F' from DAFF. The department is just known as DAF now. There are no longer two 'FFs'. I asked about the cost of getting rid of the second 'F'.

An honourable member: What's the second 'F' for?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Forestry, of course. I must say that, although there is not anything new in this budget for forestry, I was pleased—and I am on record saying this—that the minister acknowledged that there is still a forestry sector within DAF. As I represent the great seat of Nanango, a solid forestry seat—one of few, I would dare say—I think it is important that DAF has a second 'F', hence why I am very pleased to be the shadow minister for agriculture, fisheries and forestry.

I want to follow up on the net-free zones that the previous speaker and, in particular, the chair talked about. In the estimates process the minister's answer to fisheries management being based on sound scientific principles was particularly poor. In his attempt to justify the creation of three net-free zones on the Central Queensland coast, he and his government appear to be blatantly ignoring scientific advice from their own fisheries department that shows that state fisheries are sustainably managed.

The minister's explanation that the zones were all about protecting the Great Barrier Reef bears no correlation to the scientific advice from his own fisheries experts. Further, his explanation of compensation to the 53 commercial fishers who will be displaced—not even going towards the other businesses downstream—was weak and showed a lack of understanding of the impact that his government's decision is making on those 53 businesses. But more than that, the government keeps talking about 6,000 people. What about the 26,000 people from Queensland who signed the petition that was tabled in this House?

I refer members to *Hansard* where I asked the minister, in relation to net-free zones—

Just so I can be clear, so you are telling commercial fishermen they are allowed to continue to fish should they wish to do so?

The minister's response was—

They can.

I am looking for clarification on that from the minister and so is the commercial fishing industry. We have gone backwards and forwards over this many times in the House, but I need to touch on the funding and staffing cuts in the department and need it to be on the record. No matter how one looks at it there have been cuts in the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. No-one, particularly industry, can believe the minister's explanation to estimates about the staff cuts at DAF. His own SDS at page 15 clearly shows FTE numbers were cut by 138. This is a reduction of the DAF workforce no matter how you look at it. If the minister was so proud of them, why not keep them on the books? Why not put them into biosecurity? We have gone over and over this. We need to look at this for what it is—that is, the budget papers clearly show that there is a reduction in staff in DAF. I was disappointed in the minister's response in relation to this.

(Time expired)