




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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MOTION: SELECT COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEBT AND DROUGHT

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (6.10 pm): It is incredible to me that the minister has just so simply missed the point. As the Leader of the Opposition has so adequately said, the purpose of the motion is to create a parliamentary select committee. I appreciate that the minister has not been in this place for very long—he has actually been here the same length of time as I have—but surely he would know that the committee he has proposed to set up is a completely toothless tiger. We as an opposition are giving the government an option to have a committee with a task force—a parliamentary select committee—that has some teeth. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, it can do things. It can ask industry groups to report to it. In the 22 days since the minister stood up and announced this committee, what has happened?

Mr Springborg: Nothing.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Absolutely nothing, in 22 days. The minister says that this is a bipartisan committee. Where is the bipartisanship? The government will not even let us choose our own member! How is that bipartisan? The government is set on dictating terms to the opposition. We propose a parliamentary select committee to which industry groups can come along and give evidence.

Mr Springborg: In public.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: They can give evidence in public and the committee will have some teeth. Just today I spoke to several of our agricultural industry groups in relation to this. They are very supportive of a parliamentary select committee. They tell me that the reason they are very supportive of it is that it will have some teeth. They can come in and report to a parliamentary committee that actually will carry some weight. They have been waiting 22 days for a meeting. They have not even had a meeting. The industry groups that the minister refers to are still waiting on the terms of reference—22 days into the 60 days set down by the minister when he first announced this.

One of the issues the parliamentary select committee would be able to raise is encouraging our financial institutions to provide the information to QRAA so that QRAA would be in a position to conduct a drought survey and release that drought survey information. That information has not been prepared since 2011. It was at that point that industry groups were saying, 'Should we be able to have that information?' That should be put on the table in front of a committee. Then it would have some teeth—to force the government to actually listen to a policy that it may be able to implement.

This is all about developing positive policies for the situation our rural producers find themselves in in relation to rural debt and drought. This is not about saying, 'We just need to throw more money at the situation.' This is about finding some policies and utilising the powers of a select committee, with the imprimatur of the parliament, to get some outcomes.

Our primary producers are sick of waiting for this. They have heard the announcement. Twenty-two days later, we are still standing here and there is no bipartisanship. This minister will not even allow the Leader of the Opposition to choose the committee member from this side of the House.

That is exactly why we are looking to have a parliamentary select committee—so that it has some teeth and can actually produce some outcomes.

I note for the minister that we have had parliamentary select committees—one into petrol pricing in 2005 and another into the presence of TVs in the chamber in 2007. If it was important enough to have a parliamentary select committee to talk about the price of petrol or about whether we should have TVs in this chamber, surely the financial crisis faced by our rural producers is important enough to warrant a parliamentary select committee.