



Speech By  
**Dale Last**

**MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN**

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Record of Proceedings, 10 May 2016

## **MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

### **Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (12.22 pm): I am honoured to be promoted to the role of shadow minister for agriculture, fisheries and forestry, a portfolio that is very dear to my heart and one that has the potential to change the face of Queensland. At the outset I want to acknowledge the excellent work performed in this portfolio by my predecessor, Deb Frecklington, who had a real connection with the bush, agriculture and our primary industries.

It is my intention to ensure Queensland's primary industries have a strong voice in the parliament, to highlight their issues and continue the common sense and practical policy work of the LNP. I will be working as hard as I can to support our primary industries and that means working with all major industry groups and stakeholders to do my bit to help them reach their full potential because we really do have great potential for growth in our farm, fishing and forestry industries, potential that I believe is not being realised under this Labor government.

Over the coming weeks I will be travelling throughout Queensland meeting with industry groups, families on the land and rural and remote communities to take on board their concerns and issues. I grew up on the land and the grounding I received in the cattle, sugarcane and horticultural industries will stand me in good stead in this role. Indeed, I have three brothers who, apart from keeping me grounded, work in the cattle and sugarcane industries and are a valuable source of knowledge. I have continued that involvement with the land throughout my career and at various times I have been a grazer, a share farmer and a contract musterer. I have also cut sleepers and cypress pine in the forestry sector in Central Queensland and worked with National Parks staff in Cape York Peninsula to control vermin, and I have no hesitation in saying that I love the bush.

My electorate takes its name from the mighty Burdekin River and centres on the towns of Ayr and Home Hill where sugar is the mainstay industry, an industry that underpins hundreds of local jobs and businesses, including the Hall and Mio families, Don Heatley, the Rapisarda families and, of course, down at Bowen the Born and Jurgen families. These farmers and businesses are concerned about a range of issues, principally around power and water costs, and it is my intention to continue advocating on their behalf for relief in these areas.

I will be working with our farmers to reduce farm runoff and protect the reef whilst maintaining the rights of our farmers to properly manage their farms without the unnecessary restrictions that those opposite wish to impose by scrapping the LNP's soundly based vegetation management framework. I will also be standing up for our farmers in western shires who remain in the grip of drought, many of whom are now facing their fourth and fifth year of record low rainfall as a result of the failure of the wet season. I note there has been some very welcome rain in the far west and south-west with the region around Birdsville receiving more than 50 millimetres and Napper Merrie on the South Australian border,

more than 100 millimetres. This is great news, but more than 80 per cent of Queensland remains drought declared and these graziers, landholders and their local communities cannot be forgotten and I will be doing whatever I can to ensure that support measures for these Queenslanders are as generous and as well targeted as possible.

Unlike those opposite, the LNP has a clear plan for agriculture in Queensland, supported by common-sense policies for all our major primary industries. Like my predecessor, I intend to work very closely with key stakeholder groups and I have already started that consultation process. I will be listening to their needs and I will not be playing politics with groups in any sector, as Labor and Bill Byrne shamefully have done with fishing, demonising commercial fishers and listening only to their rec fishing mates, which has led to widespread anger and disillusionment that has cost this state real jobs.

I am passionate about agriculture and working to develop the full potential of Queensland's primary industries, especially in North Queensland, through fully planned and costed development of water resources and high-value farmland, helping to deliver the infrastructure, water, roads, power and ports infrastructure that are needed.

Development of agribusiness in this state should be seen as paramount. It is my vision that agribusiness will rise to become the leading economic development and job creating industry in the state of Queensland. As the shadow minister for agriculture, fisheries and forestry, I will be looking to build a Queensland global agribusiness strategy that promotes agribusiness in Asia with Queensland and Australia's trade agreement partners China, Japan and Korea. I will also be working on the promotion of education and training in agribusiness in schools, TAFEs and universities because at the end of the day the LNP is about creating long-term jobs and looking after our farmers.