




Speech By  
**Dale Last**

**MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN**

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Record of Proceedings, 10 November 2016

**MOTION: MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES**

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (6.00 pm): I move—

That this House condemns the Palaszczuk government for abandoning regional and remote Queenslanders and failing to appoint a replacement Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries.

If ever we needed evidence that the portfolio of agriculture, fisheries and forestry was at the bottom of the food chain when it comes to this government, we need look no further than what has unfolded this week—a week in which we saw another CFMEU union hack fall by the wayside and the important agriculture portfolio shunted on to the police minister, to add to his bulging list of responsibilities. We only have to look at this week's *Queensland Country Life* and the headline 'I owe, I owe, out the door I go' to understand that this government has become a laughing stock of regional and rural Queensland. I table that document.

*Tabled paper:* Article from *Queensland Country Life*, dated 10 November 2016, titled 'I owe, I owe, out the door I go' [\[2057\]](#).

What a disgrace! What a blight on the agriculture industry in this state that the agriculture minister cannot pay her rates, drives around in an unregistered car and has to stand up in this place and resign. This is a position that represents the agriculture, fishery and forestry sectors across Queensland—the position at the top of the pyramid, the position that all sectors look towards for direction, support and guidance.

Rural and regional Queensland have a right to be outraged. They have a right to demand that the Premier sort out this mess once and for all. We do not want another lame-duck minister who has no clue about agriculture. We need a minister who is actually going to deliver for the rural sector and provide the direction we desperately need.

I draw the attention of the House to comments from the Queensland Farmers' Federation President, Stuart Armitage, in today's *Queensland Country Life*. He stated—

Agriculture is critical to the success of the Queensland economy. It is regional and rural Queensland's mainstay employer and importantly, it is a growing sector during the resources downturn.

...

Investment in the sector will provide a major boost for the state's economy and much needed jobs for regional and rural Queenslanders.

Here we are, a week after disgraced minister Donaldson resigned, still waiting for the Premier to appoint a new minister for agriculture and fisheries. Who will that person be? Who of those opposite has the runs on the board to step up and take on this vitally important portfolio? Who will it be?

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Mr LAST:** I take the interjection from the member for Nanango. I do not see anyone over there with the credentials to take on that important portfolio.

The failure by the Premier to appoint a minister to this portfolio shows this government's contempt for rural and regional Queensland and our primary industries. This is an industry that underpins our economy—an industry with an annual value of production of around \$17 billion, employing over 90,000 people including in first-round processing. Agriculture, fisheries and forestry support over 30,000 businesses, earn over \$5.4 billion in exports and are far too important to Queensland to be put in the hands of yet another dud minister.

The appointment of a new minister must be above gender rebalance and Left factional payback. Dare I say it, it should be on merit. I know that might be a foreign concept to those opposite. I say to the Premier: do the right thing by the bush, do the right thing for agriculture and please appoint someone who has some experience in the rural sector.

This is a critical time for agriculture, with a new US President and the ever-changing dynamics of international agricultural trade demanding attention. This is vital for the Queensland economy, regional prosperity and jobs, and it is about time the Palaszczuk Labor government gave this sector the recognition and attention it deserves.

We even have peak farm body AgForce highlighting the succession of ministers and failures that has led to instability that no sector needs. Is the message getting through, Premier? Our agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors feel abandoned. At a time when they need the government's support, it has let them down. The Premier should stop treating primary industries like the poor cousin and show this parliament and her fellow Queenslanders that rural and regional Queensland matters. Our primary industries sector deserves better, and the last thing our farm, fisheries and forestry industries need is another dud minister chosen by faceless ALP power brokers as payback. The Premier should show her commitment and appoint a new minister today who actually cares about the portfolio and has the ability to deliver.