




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (8.21 pm): I rise to address the Agriculture and Environment Committee 2016-17 budget estimates report No. 20. I would like to thank Ministers Donaldson and Miles and their staff for their participation and preparation of information for the committee. I would also like to thank the parliamentary staff—Rob Hansen, Paul Douglas and Marion O'Connor. I also thank the committee chair, the member for Gladstone; the deputy chair, the member for Gympie; and my fellow committee members, the members for Mount Isa, Hervey Bay and Ipswich West.

The Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries presented budget highlights that show that the Labor Palaszczuk government understands agriculture and is supporting the sector to develop and grow and to thrive now and into the future. In recent years we have seen many shires in Queensland hit by drought. The government, through the minister's department, has set up counselling services. When the committee toured out west last year, we heard a lot of people telling us how important these counselling services are. They were highly praised indeed.

The department has also established the Climate Risk and Drought Resilience program to improve farm business capacity, seasonal forecasting and decision support tools to better manage climate risk. It is important that we learn as a state how to manage the inevitable changes in weather and climate and better prepare for the impacts. The government is also implementing the rural assistance package aimed at reducing financial stress and improving financial sustainability to assist the sector service their debt.

We must be forward thinking and be looking for new produce and new ways of growing and producing crops and livestock to keep our farmers relevant to the world demands and also to improve the type of farming on land. Advancing Queensland's agriculture innovation through the implementation of a 10-year agriculture, food and resource development and extension blueprint will do this, as well as developing innovative ways of commercialising the department's intellectual property. On the minister's advice, I sampled some of the new fruit produce at the Ekka. The fruit nectar of the Queen Garnet was particularly good and also the Daintree chocolate.

Safe Food are a Queensland government statutory body. They recognise that innovation in agriculture should include aerial drones. They can be utilised in agriculture. They can also be used for a wider range of conditions at any time as a cost-effective solution when the use of home resources is not a viable option. There is remote monitoring of fences, stock and water. These are just a few examples of how technology can be deployed. It can also be effective in areas of pest management, imaging, mapping, irrigation management and animal welfare. This is another way that this government is moving forward with technology.

Minister Donaldson did table her green paper. For the member for Gympie and the member for Hervey Bay, who said that they did not have a chance to read it and discuss it, on page 3 it outlines what a green paper is. It states—

A green paper is a document prepared on a specific policy area for discussion and comment from interested parties. Green papers do not commit the government or minister to the views expressed in the document or to a particular direction or course of action. They are designed to put forward concepts and options and to seek broad views on these proposals. The objective of the green paper is to arrive at a general consensus before developing future policy initiatives and changing legislation.

The green paper is out there, so people should comment on it. That is what it is meant for. It is great to see that the green paper is out there. It is important that we protect our fish stocks and our aquatic ecosystem. By maintaining fish stocks at higher levels, Queensland's marine ecosystems, including those in the World Heritage listed Great Barrier Reef, will be preserved. They will also be healthier and more resilient and will attract more tourists from interstate and overseas, while allowing Indigenous, recreational and commercial fishers to enjoy a better fishing experience.