




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Regional Queensland, Economy; Wild Dog Fence

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (2.50 pm): A number of reports this month demonstrate that regional Queensland continues to punch way above its weight in the Queensland economy. Despite the double whammy of drought and the resources downturn, Central Queensland is the engine room of prosperity. Highlighting record coal exports in January 2016, Queensland Resources Council CEO Michael Roche said 'regional Queensland continues to do the heavy lifting for the state's coffers'.

The January coal export record follows an annual increase in 2015 of \$23.7 billion. The Treasurer proudly announced this one himself in a media release this month. He should be proud. The Palaszczuk government will be paid royalties on every tonne exported, and the bulk of coal comes from Central Queensland. In the same media release the Treasurer excitedly announced an 18.6 per cent rise in meat sales and exports despite drought conditions, while exports from crops have reached \$1.7 billion despite the drought conditions. Much of this is the wealth of Central Queensland and the hard work of Central Queenslanders.

Money talks. While the Treasurer is excited by the money Central Queensland contributes, he is not so keen on rewarding the worker. One of the first things the Treasurer did was cut the Royalties for the Regions program, which had done so much for the mining communities in my region. He replaced it with a very light version called Building Our Regions. The new program leaves many Central Queensland communities with less funding, be they remote shires in the central west or shires like Isaac and Central Highlands with numerous mines, broadacre and irrigation farming and beef production.

The Treasurer is starving Central Queensland of the rewards of our labour. When Clive Palmer threatens 250 jobs in Townsville it is treated like a state emergency. While I have every sympathy for QNI employees and their families, I simply point out that the resources industry alone in my area of Central Queensland has shed up to 20,000 jobs in the past two years, yet there is no response from this government. In fact, Labor's own budget papers show that it slashed capital spending in the Mackay region by \$150 million. The same budget saw very little in capital expenditure for Gregory's state schools.

The central west is faring no better. The latest Bureau of Statistics figures show that the outback Queensland unemployment rate has increased from 4.9 per cent to six per cent. Government funding should be maintaining the resilience of the central west until these iconic communities can recover from the drought.

At the end of January I made a personal representation to the Premier about the importance of wild dog fencing. I also wrote to her to emphasise the need. Wild dog fencing has the capacity to bring the wool industry back to the central west and bring prosperity with it because the wool industry is a big employer. Once western Gregory was the home of multiple shearing teams. Then wild dogs ate the

wool industry out. I know that central western mayors have also begged the Premier to properly fund this fence initiative so that we are ready post drought. What do we get? We get reannouncement after reannouncement—the same \$5 million over and over again. I had one constituent say, ‘There must be \$20 million.’ I had to say, ‘No, mate. It is the same \$5 million again.’

(Time expired)