



Speech By  
**Mark Furner**


**MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE**

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Record of Proceedings, 11 October 2016

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Backpacker Tax**

 **Mr FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (11.59 am): Every member of this Queensland parliament should be concerned over the federal government's position of introducing new taxes which will affect the Queensland economy. The coalition government's decision to increase taxes on international backpackers and those travellers leaving or entering our shores will see dramatic long-term effects on this state. We know the Turnbull government's backpacker tax will also hurt regional Queensland. Those opposite who are regional members should be standing up to this federal government about this particular tax.

Our agricultural and tourism industries rely on backpackers for seasonal jobs like fruit picking, harvesting and hospitality, and we do not want to see these industries put at risk. I know that the Minister for Tourism constantly advocates axing this tax. Backpackers spend money in our state. They are worth more than \$900 million to our tourism economy. Since the coalition federal government started talking about the backpacker tax 18 months ago, we have seen working holiday visitor nights reduce by nine per cent. By June 2016, Queensland had recorded 12.3 million visitor nights reduced from 13.5 million over the 12 months since June 2015. Concerns have been expressed across our nation from growers suggesting that 40 per cent fewer backpackers are knocking on their doors this year than every other year. Growers have indicated that Australia's reputation as a working destination has been damaged, and New Zealand and Canada are seen as more attractive to people who have already booked their flights.

I refer to an article in the *Rural Weekly* by Ian Groves, who reported that, although the proposed 19 per cent is still a little on the high side for his liking, he is really concerned about the effect on his business, Groves Grown Tropical Fruits, located outside of Yeppoon. He indicated that he wished the government would come to a conclusion soon. He did not think it would take so long. He also mentioned in the article that New Zealand and Canada have a tax of around 15 per cent. I table that document.

*Tabled paper:* Article from the *Rural Weekly*—Central Queensland Edition, dated 7 October 2016, titled 'Has lower backpacker tax gone far enough?' [[1820](#)].

While the Palaszczuk Labor government has been closely working with the tourism industry on many fronts and attracting record numbers of international and national tourists to our state, the Turnbull government's new tax is having the direct opposite effect, as we know. The Prime Minister heads a government in disarray—a government captured by the extreme far right of the LNP. The likes of George Christensen, member for Dawson, pulls the puppet strings of this Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull. The last thing our tourism industry needs is a new tax. We should be making it easy for people to holiday and work in Queensland, not harder.

I listened to a question in estimates that was directed to the agriculture minister, the Hon. Leanne Donaldson. It was about her travelling around the state and meeting with business owners. One thing they continue to make clear to her is that they do not want this backpacker tax. We on this side are in tune and in touch with the community of Queensland, particularly the regional community, as to what people are experiencing as a result of this insidious tax. Businesspeople have made it clear that backpackers will simply stop coming, predominantly to the regional communities they like to go to, because of this tax. This means that international backpackers who come to work on farms or spend their money in regional establishments will not come here at all. They have already indicated that they will go to countries like Canada and New Zealand where the tax rate is lower.

The honourable minister went on to mention that federal LNP member Michelle Landry said that she would like to see the backpacker tax gone. Maybe she should stand up in parliament in Canberra and advocate that like the member for Dawson did. The proposed tax is now 19 per cent which our regional growers are saying is not good enough. They want it gone. Even the National Farmers Federation has said that it has real concerns about this tax and has spoken against it.

I call on the LNP members opposite to have one ounce of courage and one ounce of conviction to pick up their phones and call their federal coalition government partners to axe this new tax. It is time they showed some backbone and stood up to the people in Canberra. They are silent. They sit on their hands and do not refer to anything they introduce. They are quiet in this chamber. They are quiet down there. It is about time they stood up and showed some intestinal fortitude and made sure that these new taxes which were never promised leading into the 2016 election are not implemented. It is about time they got some backbone.