




Speech By
Tony Perrett

MEMBER FOR GYMPIE

Record of Proceedings, 16 August 2016

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Mr PERRETT** (Gympie—LNP) (8.02 pm): I rise to speak on the Agriculture and Environment Committee's budget estimates report. Anyone present at estimates would have walked away with serious concerns that the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries is not across her portfolio. Options for answers fell into three categories: either there was a complete lack of knowledge about issues, there was a default to callow answers demonstrating an inability to grasp the broader concepts of industry issues or, in the case of Dorothy Dixers and knowing the questions beforehand, there was a reliance on being spoonfed the well-rehearsed answers by a political adviser handing across sheets of paper to read.

With 2.5 per cent spending cuts and several vague new policy projects being pursued, the minister has little grasp of industry issues, with patently inadequate responses demonstrating absolutely no understanding of the impact of government policy on issues within her portfolio. It was revealed that the minister had not even lobbied the Deputy Premier over the controversial vegetation management laws, which are being driven by inner-city greens who congregate in concrete jungles. Those laws are set to devastate our agricultural industries. The minister continues to bury her head in the sand, despite repeated warnings from stakeholders, including AgForce, who warn that the laws will damage farm productivity and profitability.

Time and time again, it was clear that consultation with industry stakeholders was either non-existent or inadequate. The minister again demonstrated either a complete disregard or, more seriously, a lack of knowledge about serious issues in the beef industry. As a result, the minister's own Labor Party colleague, the member for Bundamba, cuttingly and humiliatingly described her answer about beef processing as a 'rissole led recovery'. The minister could not clearly articulate what consultation had been undertaken with Queensland's 19,000 commercial beef and dairy producers regarding the decision to dump Queensland's protected zone status for bovine Johne's disease. The minister totally ignored the clear advice from the dairy industry and was unable to point to any genuine consultation with the broader beef industry.

The biosecurity issue of the tick line highlighted inadequate decision-making, policy concerns and a lack of consultation and commitment to listen to the wishes and needs of landholders who have invested significant time and funds in dealing with ticks. There appears to be no fallback containment plan for fire ant eradication and its potential cost to taxpayers. The release of the Fisheries green paper a day before estimates, clearly aimed at approving a policy shift without a shred of scientific data, shows the contempt this government holds for those in the industry.

The thought bubble of a new \$2 million Office of Rural Affairs looks to be destined to waste funds. The minister could not provide detail about its charter, where it would be based or whether it would be headed by a full-time or part-time commissioner, let alone what the staff would actually do. With a funding package of \$250,000 in new money and \$250,000 in kind over four years for the new office, a

commissioner's potential salary package and on-costs, including travel, there is very little left for staff or resources to undertake real work.

No thought has been given to the federal government's announcement of a regional investment corporation to administer drought and hardship concessional loans, which would make redundant much of the work of the 100-odd staff of the revamped new Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority. The minister is not consulting with key stakeholders, is running policy that is entirely based on politics and undermines large sections of regional industries that support smaller family run businesses and thousands of jobs, and is unable to grasp the fundamentals of the industries for which she is responsible.

It is also particularly concerning that the Environment and Heritage Protection, National Parks and Great Barrier Reef portfolio is being run as a political tool and is being driven by the need to pander to green activists in exchange for preference deals. Policies appear to be about demonising our agriculture, fishing and mining industries. This one-size-fits-all policy and approach is just lazy. Nature conservation policies ignore best management practice undertaken by stakeholders, and insufficient resources for implementation, a loose interpretation of policies and serious questions about whether they have the correct declarations are not addressed. Plans for further World Heritage listings, particularly around Tin Can Bay and Hervey Bay, by the minister appear to dismiss the economic impact this will have on many family run businesses and the hundreds of local jobs that they directly support.

Estimates has left with me little confidence that the members of this government have any idea what they are doing. Before I conclude, I would like to thank Rob Hansen and the secretariat staff for the wonderful job that they have done, not only prior to the estimates but also during that period, to pull the report together. I commend them on their efforts. I look forward to working with the committee members over the next few months.