




Speech By
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GENE TECHNOLOGY (QUEENSLAND) BILL

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (4.40 pm): I will make a brief contribution to the debate on the Gene Technology Bill 2016. Other members have spoken about the objectives of the bill. Ultimately, we are trying to achieve a good understanding, both federally and across state jurisdictions, of what people are doing in terms of genetic research.

In my local area, for many years the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries has had an office at Tor Street, where this type of research has been carried out repeatedly, whether it is modifying genes or just selecting different species and cross-pollinating to get an outcome. Ultimately, this is the kind of research that Queensland needs. Agriculture is a really big industry for Queensland, particularly for us on the downs. There are some great agricultural industries there, particularly in the grains and cotton areas. It is very important to make sure that we have the very best genetic material so that our farmers and our primary producers are competitive internationally. If we are looking for a crop to be resistant to drought or pests, we have to make sure that we can investigate that fully and in a sensible way, pulling research from interstate and across jurisdictions, to make sure that we can get the very best outcome. Australia, and certainly Queensland, needs to have the species that suit our environment, is able to grow very productively in our environment and at the same time be resistant to pests or drought.

Nearly two years ago Barnaby Joyce came up to Toowoomba and, with the Grains Research and Development Corporation, announced a \$14 million research package for the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. Some of that funding is being spent in my electorate of Toowoomba North at the Tor Street facility. That funding led to the creation of jobs. That research package was aimed at encouraging young people to go into this very important industry. If we have a legislative framework that will allow the industry to develop in Queensland, hopefully, we can attract federal and private funding. If we have good arrangements that give people secure property rights and boundaries that mean that we are doing this research in a safe environment, we can ensure that Queensland, as it always has, is leading the way internationally in making sure that we have the species that give us the very best productive outcomes.

If we get good productive outcomes for our farmers, we can get a good price internationally. We can be very efficient because of the gene technology that is being applied to the development of the industry. The University of Southern Queensland, the research facility at Tor Street and the Grains Research and Development Corporation are all located in and around Toowoomba. I am very pleased to support this bill, as it will give assurance to people to invest in the industry in my footprint and provide jobs for young people and people who are doing tertiary studies in my footprint.

I note that this process was started under the former LNP government and it was continued by this government. I appreciate that the minister acknowledged that. Many people often see this place as a chamber where battles are held. It often can be, but this bill is good for Queensland. We agree with it. It provides opportunities for people in my electorate. I am very happy to support the bill.