




Speech By
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**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL:
AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (5.55 pm): I rise to speak in support of the report tabled on the budget estimates 2017-18 by the Agriculture and Environment Committee. The committee made one recommendation: that the proposed expenditure be agreed to without amendment. I would like to start by thanking the committee secretariat, Hansard and the parliamentary staff for their professional assistance on the day. I would also like to thank the ministers and their ministerial and departmental staff who assisted on the day.

This was my first time in the chair, and I admit that I was filled with some trepidation about the important task of chairing this committee, which covers fundamentally important portfolio areas. I was full of illness on the day of the hearing, and I felt that the members of the Liberal National Party may have come along with some passion for the agriculture portfolio, but their performance was unimpressive and the shadow minister seemed more intent on sending out media releases than scrutinising the budget. I admit: it would be a tough job being the shadow minister for the environment, but I thought we may have got past some fairly pedestrian questions about emails.


A government member: You thought wrong.

Mr KELLY: I did think wrong. I take that interjection. I was pleased as chair, though, that other members of the committee pursued issues of importance to them and to the entire Queensland community. The member for Ipswich West pursued his ongoing interest in biosecurity, particularly in relation to white spot disease and tropical race 4. If you want to talk about passion for agriculture, do not get the member for Ipswich West started on the topic of weed research. There will be passion!

Rural economic development, fisheries and crocodile management were examined by the member for Mackay. The member for Bundamba questioned the minister over issues related to the beef industry—concern for the workers at her local meatworks and the entire beef industry. The member for Mount Isa continued the examination of multiperil insurance, an issue he has pursued vigorously.

Both ministers provided thorough answers to all questions put to them, demonstrating a deep knowledge of their portfolio areas. In both portfolio areas the themes were rather similar: the Palaszczuk government inherited a mess—a mess consisting of cuts to staff and cuts to programs. It was obvious that the ministers had diligently worked with their departments to rebuild front-line services and to re-establish programs cut by the member for Clayfield when he was treasurer.

I know that the agriculture minister will want to respond personally to much of the nonsense that was just peddled, but let us talk about some other cuts. Let us consider the magnitude of what the ministers were dealing with. I will take the example of Biosecurity Queensland. Twenty-six per cent of Biosecurity staff were cut by the member for Clayfield—one in four staff, gone. We live in a time of ever-expanding movement of people, produce, stock and vehicles.

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (7.40 pm), continuing: I was speaking about cuts to Biosecurity Queensland and the impact that they have had and the mess that the ministers were cleaning up. It is quite a complex area. Someone could be trekking through a field in Africa or Asia one day and flying to Queensland for a backpacking holiday within 24 hours. The biosecurity risks are very real. The only way to deal with this is to have the resources and programs in place. What was the previous government's response to this type of environment? They chose to cut one in four staff. I am not sure I would use the adjective 'strong' to describe that choice.

There are so many aspects of this budget that are exciting that it is hard to know what to talk about. Perhaps I will focus on an issue that I discussed recently during a committee visit to Western Queensland. I had the great privilege to spend time with a man who owned a sheep property. He explained to me what a difference the wild dog fencing had made to the sheep industry. He put it quite simply: 'We have sheep back in Western Queensland and properties like mine are once again viable. That has been achieved because your government listened and acted.' I am pleased to see that we are continuing that action on wild dogs with initiatives continuing to be funded in the budget.

I could go on about the agricultural budget initiatives such as the Rural Economic Development package or the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy, but I should turn my attention to the environment portfolio. Again, the minister is cleaning up a mess left by the previous government. His department had 20 per cent of its staff cut by the member for Clayfield. I was pleased to see the \$9.3 million investment for more officers identifying environmental risks—60 new front-line staff and many of those jobs are in regional Queensland.

Estimates hearings have demonstrated that the ministers continue the task of cleaning up the mess left by the previous government. More importantly, the ministers have the vision and the programs that have led to record agricultural exports and a sustainable environment. I commend the report to the House.