




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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MOTION: DISALLOWANCE OF STATUTORY INSTRUMENT

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (9.11 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to tonight's debate. Let me make it clear from the start that the LNP supports primary producers and their right to access firearms. We consider them a tool of the trade. Where I come from in the seat of Gregory one of the biggest issues we face at the moment is access to category H licences. Category H licences are a tool of the trade for primary producers who cover properties from 25,000 to 80,000 acres. The category H licence is something that I regard as an important tool of the trade for primary producers. It is an animal welfare issue. If there is a beast that needs to be put down it can be put down quite easily and quickly. The last thing we want to see is primary producers running around with longarms on the back of four wheelers going through grids and fences.

We have seen a hold up in the access to category H licences. People who want to renew their category H licence have been unable to renew it. A couple of weeks ago a person who has had his category H licence since 1970 received news that his category H licence will not be renewed. He has had a pistol since 1970. He uses that in the same way one would use a pair of pliers to fix a fence or a shifter to fix a pump. It is there to be used as a tool of the trade. If he sees a beast that needs to be put down or he sees some dogs who are attacking some ewes, he is able to use that weapon very quickly and effectively to protect livestock on his place. He has had his category H licence for well over 30 to 40 years. He is a law-abiding person and a good member of the community. For him to be refused this licence is a real concern.

I call on the Labor government to make sure that primary producers have access to those licences because they are very important. Those primary producers feel alienated and demonised when they are refused licences they have held for a very long time. These are people who are on 30,000, 40,000, 50,000, 80,000-acre properties who travel from water point to water point, from bore to bore, from trough to trough to check water and to check on stock. They need to have access to that type of weapon.

I continue to get calls into my office with people saying, 'I have had access to this licence for well over 40 to 50 years. It was handed down by my grandfather. We are not lone cowboys.' At one stage a former agriculture minister labelled them lone cowboys. It was absolutely insulting to those hardworking graziers to say that they were lone cowboys. They are responsible, law-abiding people. It is important to recognise that these people need to be treated fairly. I note that AgForce has come out today and expressed its concern about this being the thin end of the wedge. I will be looking at this very carefully and making sure that primary producers have access to the weapons they need to be able to carry out their day-to-day operations. They are not criminals. If the government wants to get rid of criminals or the issue of access to guns then maybe it should have a look at the watering down of bikie legislation. That is where we see access to those sorts of weapons.

Primary producers are law-abiding people who are sick of being demonised. If they are not being demonised through vegetation management they are being demonised through this issue. These are the people who are putting food and on our table and fibre on our back. They are the unsung heroes of

the economic renaissance we will hopefully have soon in Queensland. We have critical opportunities to access key markets in Asia, certainly with our beef industry with the growing demand for protein. For us to access that market we need to get rid of more red tape and allow primary producers to conduct their businesses the way that they need to.

As the son of a primary producer, the grandson of a grazier and great-grandson of a grazier, I could not be more passionate about agriculture because it is something I believe in. I know members here are very passionate about it. We do not need to be demonised. We do not need to be used as political capital. When it comes to election time the same card seems to be rolled out.

Mr Power interjected.

Mr MILLAR: I will take that interjection from the member for Logan and ask why are we seeing the Deputy Premier introduce vegetation management laws that will stop people in their tracks and stop agricultural production? When was the last time high-value agricultural land was approved by the Labor government? Never! You have to approve high-value agricultural land to grow increased opportunities. We have India waiting for more chickpeas. We need to give producers the opportunity to run their businesses the way they see fit.

One of the issues is access to the firearms that they need. One of the biggest issues I have in Western Queensland is access to category H licences and the continual denial of their applications given that they have had them for 30 to 40 years. It is shocking—in fact, it is depressing—when one sees this happening to law-abiding men in their 70s and 80s who have paid their taxes and played a huge part in their community. They have been involved in growing agriculture, whether it is increasing wool production or increasing beef production, and providing jobs and associated opportunities for the towns where they spend money with the local tyre fitter or the auto electrician. Agricultural production is the most important thing and to be demonised and used as political capital on these sorts of issues is wrong.

I will always stand up for agriculture and primary producers. I hope that we would all do that. I will be keeping a very close eye on this issue and making sure that primary producers have access to the weapons that they need. It is not a luxury. They are not, as a former agriculture minister said, lone cowboys. They use these firearms in the proper way. They have been taught from a very young age how to properly handle a firearm. I remember my father teaching me from a very young age how to handle a firearm. He was very strict and stringent in the way that we handled them. We have gun safes. We are law-abiding people, but we seem to get caught up in this issue all the time.