




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Agriculture

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (2.48 pm): Today, I rise to put on the public record the enormous contribution that the agricultural sector makes to the Queensland economy. It is the unsung economic hero of our state. In the Central Highlands alone, we produce 15 per cent of Australia's chickpea crop annually and 25 per cent of the nation's mung bean crop. Last season we produced over 180,000 bales of cotton. We have 380,000 citrus trees and produce 90 per cent of Queensland's mandarin exports.

Across Central Queensland we have about 4.8 million head of cattle. The Central Highlands alone has one of the greatest beef livestock densities in Australia. Annually we grow more than 150 hectares of wheat, and more than 100,000 head of cattle go through our saleyards, which equates to approximately \$100 million. We also have an emerging macadamia industry, with 260,000 new seedlings and trees.

In the west we have the Mitchell Grass Downs, the gidgee and the mulga country. Although we have been hammered by drought, we produce some of the best quality beef and wool. Of course, the world-renowned, iconic Channel Country produces our famous Channel Country beef.

Despite all this, somehow we find ourselves without a dedicated full-time agriculture minister—no full-time agriculture minister sitting around the cabinet table fighting for a fair share for the state's economic powerhouse. Queensland exported \$9.1 billion of rural commodities in 2014-15 to the US, Japan and China. The former agriculture minister, Bill Byrne, resigned from cabinet on 9 October. Seventeen days have passed since then and there has been not a murmur from the Premier about appointing a full-time replacement.

Queensland Labor has shown blatant contempt for our hardworking primary producers and Queensland's agriculture industry. This government is all about South-East Queensland. I bet if Labor lost its industrial relations minister it would have a replacement within an hour. If it lost its environment minister, the Deputy Premier would make sure that position was filled within five minutes so the Deputy Premier and the environment minister can continue to demonise our primary producers over vegetation management to pick up some Greens votes in South-East Queensland and Brisbane. Instead, the agriculture portfolio has been treated like the poor country cousin of Brisbane. The Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines has been appointed as the acting minister. This is not good enough.

Labor has made the claim that there were staff cuts to the agriculture department under the LNP when today's official public sector figures prove that under Labor in the agriculture department there are now 200 fewer staff than under the LNP. At the end of June the agriculture department had 1,968 FTE staff. That compares with 2,168 under the LNP. I table those documents.

Tabled paper: Extract from 2014-15 Queensland State Budget Service Delivery Statements Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, page 7, regarding staffing [\[2136\]](#).

Tabled paper: Extract from Queensland public sector quarterly workforce profile, page 4, regarding Queensland public sector profile [\[2137\]](#).

The LNP worked hard to reform a dedicated department of agriculture. The former Labor Party lost the agriculture department. Now it has turned the other way around. They have a department of agriculture that we set up but cannot find a minister for agriculture. That is absolutely wrong. I call on the Premier to appoint an agriculture minister today.