




Speech By  
**Patrick Weir**

**MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE**

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

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (7.53 pm): I rise to speak to the report on the Agriculture and Environment Committee's estimates hearing as the deputy chair of the committee. During the hearing, it became plain to us that, as far as the agriculture portfolio is concerned, the Labor Party have once again shown they are no friend to agriculture. We saw in the budget papers for another year another cut in the agricultural budget, a cut of 3.2 per cent. Whilst the minister seemed to be in denial about this fact, the figures are there in black and white. There was \$438.95 million for 2016-17 and \$424.74 million for 2017-18, down \$14.2 million. It is the same with staff numbers, with fewer staff in the department now than when the LNP left government in 2014-15. While the minister might like to deny this, those figures are there in black and white.

**Mr Byrne** interjected.

**Mr Millar** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Linard): Minister and member for Gregory, can you stop your conversation across the chamber so we can hear the member for Condamine.

**Mr WEIR:** This once again shows the value that the Labor Party put on agriculture. Another part of the report that concerned me was when the shadow minister, Dale Last, attempted to ask a question regarding electricity. This question was initially ruled out of order but it was then allowed when we convinced the committee that electricity costs do fit within the portfolio. Electricity well and truly does fit within the portfolio. Whether it be cane, cotton, horticulture, dairy, beef or meat processing, there is no greater impact on agriculture than the cost of electricity. One thing this government has done is drive the producers and the irrigators in this country away from electricity. Out in the area that I come from, irrigators are going back to diesel. They are switching off their electricity pumps and installing diesel motors. When we look around the plains at Condamine, we see big plumes of black smoke coming out of diesel motors because they cannot afford to turn on their electricity pumps.

Research is another very, very important area. We saw once again the delay in the purchase of another property for QRDC. This is the second year this figure has been in the budget. We hear the minister talk about the growth in exports and the returns this brings into Queensland, particularly chickpeas. Research and development is incredibly important with pulse seeds. We have a large chickpea crop in the ground once again, but already it is suffering due to the disease ascochyta. More research and development needs to be spent on this to contain it, and that research needs to be spread across the state. Central Queensland farming practices are very, very different to those in the south so it needs to be spread much wider.

There was a question about sugar. There is no doubt that if the Labor Party wins the next election the sugar growers will once again be the victims of Wilmar's marketing monopoly. That was very, very apparent. These are not just my opinions. We saw editorials from both QFF and AgForce describe this budget as underwhelming and one that outlines no clear vision for the agricultural industry. I support those words.

I will move on to Environment and Heritage. As the shadow minister, the member for Moggill, mentioned, it was good to see the minister supporting the Adani coalmining project. That is great to see, with much needed jobs in that. One of the big concerns that we have with the environment is the money that is being spent on pests and weeds. We heard that the budget will be much the same as it was last year, and we worked out that that equates to 44 cents spent on pest management per hectare across our national parks. In the area I come from, there is the Bunya Mountains and they are infested with wild pigs. There is no doubt there will be no hatching of scrub turkeys or bowerbirds in that mountain range. They have been absolutely decimated by wild pigs.

The minister pulled another stunt when he brought in a large crocodile mat showing the length and size of a crocodile. It was one of the Labor members who actually pulled him up on the stunt and asked that that be removed.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr WEIR:** It was very, very fair. Prickly acacia is another matter that was raised. The committee was up there recently and we saw the damage this is having through that area and spreading into the Channel Country. This is something that needs to be addressed with the utmost importance. Once again, agriculture is the poor cousin—

*(Time expired)*