




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2018

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

**State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development
Committee, Report**

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (12.40 pm): I commence by commending the chair, the member for Bancroft, and government members for their ability to chair and conduct a reasonable estimates hearing. I also thank the other members of the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee for the opportunity to appear before the estimates hearing to discuss the 2018-19 state budget.

When I took over this portfolio last year following the re-election of the Palaszczuk Labor government I made it my priority to immediately hit the road and get out into regional and rural Queensland to meet as many farmers, stakeholders and industry leaders as possible. Since then I have travelled more than 31,000 kilometres and visited 42 towns and cities. The people I met want to hear the good news from the estimates but the LNP did not want to talk up the sector. Those men and women on Queensland properties are the heart and soul of the industry. Every encounter I have had across the state informs and educates decisions that are made around the cabinet table, whether that be in the regions or in Brisbane—important decisions such as the allocation of \$10 million over three years for rural economic development grants or the allocation of \$3 million over three years for the Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network, an initiative backed by industry to provide jobs and skills for farm workers across the state but which the LNP has never backed in.

One thing I quickly learned is that the title of agricultural industry development and fisheries minister does not come close to outlining how diverse this portfolio is. From biosecurity to animal welfare and from exhibited animals to the state's vast forestry network, there is a lot of ground to cover, yet the LNP did not want to talk about the portfolio at estimates for one moment.

I am committed to working with our regional cities, towns and industries to drive economic development across the state, whether it is on the water, in a control room or on a plantation. I want to promote the industry's leadership and success stories, whether it is delivering jobs, new products or new markets. This is in stark contrast to the LNP, who want to do nothing more than talk down Queensland's \$19.5 billion agriculture industry. While the Palaszczuk government gets on with the job of working for the agricultural sector in Queensland, all we hear from those opposite is whinge, whinge, whinge—no policy, unfunded promises, negativity and no vision for Queensland's future.

While those opposite do not believe in renewable energy, they certainly believe in recycled questions. Again we heard the same old lines from the member for Gympie that have been used over and over in previous estimates hearings. I can assure him that there have been no cuts to Biosecurity staffing levels. He just does not know how to read his Service Delivery Statements. There is a difference

in the number of actual full-time staff and the threshold number in case we have to deal with an emergency biosecurity incident such as Panama or white spot disease. If we do not leave this buffer, we will not be able to respond in a meaningful way.

Another point ignored by the opposition was our cattle tick roadshow, which begins today in Mitchell. If the member for Gympie were really in touch with cattle producers in this state he would realise that this review, in partnership with AgForce, has been in the works for some time. Also, there have been no cuts to research and development and no cuts to Biosecurity Queensland, as stated by the opposition members in the committee's report. They have ownership of cuts when it comes to public servants in this particular portfolio and many others of the 14,000. That is their legacy.

The estimates procedure highlights the incompetence, the lies and the downright laziness of this ineffectual opposition. Their questions lacked any research, and their wilful ignorance of the legacy of their heinous cuts to agriculture and biosecurity in Queensland will not be forgotten. I look forward to being back here next year, following a shadow cabinet reshuffle, facing some tougher questions from the real shadow agriculture spokesperson, the member for Gregory.

One thing I have heard consistently from opposition members in their contributions to this debate of the estimates hearing report is complaints about time wastage. In the portion of the hearing at which I was present—2½ hours—some 18 minutes were wasted with a dissent from the chair's ruling. Some 18 minutes out of our hearing were lost for the LNP to further investigate issues and prosecute their positions.

Before entering this place I spent 120 days in Senate estimates hearings. I have never before seen such a group of incompetent, incoherent opposition members. It is no wonder they are in opposition. It is no wonder they will remain in that position, because that is where they belong. I encourage opposition members to pick up the standing orders and to read and understand them. They should follow up on correspondence that my office has sent to them—an invitation to understand the standing orders and to understand what they perceive as staff cuts in my portfolio.

(Time expired)