




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Strawberry Industry

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (10.25 am): People in this place know of my support for the strawberry industry. Previously I have held events supporting new varieties like Red Rhapsody developed by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. Those in this place, including the press gallery, have tasted the delicious strawberries developed and grown right here in Queensland. That is why it is disappointing to rise here today to report on the current circumstances facing the strawberry industry.

This year the industry has been hit by low prices that have impacted the bottom line of strawberry farmers. On top of that, since last week we have seen the devastating impacts that this blatant and disgusting strawberry sabotage has had on growers. To have fruit tampered with in this manner impacts not only customers who purchase the fruit but also the entire supply chain. Growers, pickers, transporters, accommodation providers, the tourism industry and all the local towns suffer as a result of this insidious attack.

On Sunday I sat around the kitchen table with Luigi Coco and his family in Elimbah to hear how this deplorable act was impacting his business. Last night I met with the wider industry in Beerwah to answer their questions and discuss ways in which the industry could move forward. It is clear they are suffering right now. While it is very early in the piece to think we have the silver bullet to fix this problem, the positive nature in which the discussions were held indicate there is a light at the end of the tunnel for these growers. The Premier's announcement this morning will go a long way to begin that journey. What I can say—and I am sure I have the backing of the entire House on this—is that both we as a government and the people of Queensland will continue to support the industry. I encourage all Queenslanders to buy and consume strawberries. Cut them up, make a fruit salad with other Queensland produce and support our farmers.