




Speech By
Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Record of Proceedings, 16 October 2019

MOTION

Future Drought Fund

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (11.33 am): I rise today to support the Premier's motion. It is great listening to the opposition trying to defend the indefensible with zero dollars coming from the federal government. With 66 per cent of Queensland in drought, as we have heard today, it comes as quite a shock when the self-proclaimed party for the bush over there appears to be trying to pull the proverbial wool over Queensland farmers' eyes.

We have heard today the talk and the chatter about how they believe they are the champions for regional Queensland and for the country. Today shows that they are not. It is obvious that Queensland is experiencing two droughts here in Queensland. The first is affecting our farmers in regional communities, and that has been highlighted so far by the media here in Queensland. The second, lesser known drought is the drought of policy and original thought that is affecting those opposite.

The LNP on that side of the House need to come clean today. Do they back our farmers here in Queensland or do they back their federal counterparts in Canberra? It is quite simple. Those opposite have form on selling out Queenslanders. They have form. Just look at their position we have heard today on the Shark Control Program. They are Canberra's lapdogs and they know it.

After six years of inaction from the Morrison government, it has tried to delegate its responsibility for developing a national, comprehensive drought policy to the National Farmers' Federation. They have handed that over. Those opposite have also taken the 'don't worry about that too much' approach, as we have seen. They have not even bothered to write their own drought policy or an overall agricultural policy here in Queensland. Instead, they have taken to writing petty media releases attacking our government, which this year committed \$74 million to respond to the worsening drought conditions here in Queensland. On the ABC *Insiders* program last Sunday, Fran Kelly asked federal drought minister, David Littleproud, 'Where is your long-term drought strategy? You seem to have sanctioned it off to the NFF to give you one.' They are still pursuing that.

Most of the federal government's \$7 billion, as we have heard today, has not even been spent. The bulk of the figure is attributable to the government's \$5 billion Future Drought Fund, which was established with \$3.9 billion and will grow with earnings reinvested until the balance reaches \$5 billion, which is not expected to be achieved until 2028-29. Nothing has been spent from the \$5 billion fund to date. It starts making disbursements from 1 July next year, with \$100 million being paid each year to support Australian farmers and communities to become more prepared for, and resilient to, droughts. Those opposite should grow a backbone and support this motion to stop the farmers being denied support in the middle of the worst drought that we have seen here in Queensland.