




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Queensland Border Closure

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (2.31 pm): I rise to inform the House of the difficulties the border bubble is causing constituents. The Labor government chose to include the whole shires of Bulloo and Paroo in the bubble; however, they included only one postcode in the Balonne shire. I have written to the Premier and the Chief Health Officer asking for the inclusion of the postcodes of Bollon, St George, Thallon and Moree in the border zone due to the complex relationships between these communities. Neither the Balonne shire nor I have had a response from either the Premier or the Chief Health Officer. These postcodes have been COVID-free since the commencement of the pandemic and Moree has been COVID-free for the last three months. I have also requested a briefing from the government via the health minister. However, there has been silence from this incompetent Labor government who have no understanding of the regions.

There are school based apprentices who live at Thallon and work in Mungindi who now cannot go to work. There are shearing contractors in Bollon who will not be able to travel to their work in New South Wales. There are nurses in New South Wales who live south of the border bubble who cannot get a permit to travel to work at the Mungindi Hospital. There are pregnant mothers who cannot attend appointments with their doctors in Moree. The national bull sale selling season is well underway. The restrictions limit the ability of interstate vendors to present cattle at sales in Roma and Rockhampton and buyers to properly inspect their prospective purchases. There are businesspeople in the Balonne shire—agronomists, stock and station agents, heavy duty mechanics, contractors, chemical/seed distribution people—who are not able to get a permit to go into New South Wales to do their work and travel back without mandatory quarantine.

Omission of these postcodes is causing considerable disruption to the agricultural supply chain and the local Balonne economy. I have great concerns for the mental health of these people in the Balonne shire. They are trying to recover from one of the worst droughts in history. They need a workable border bubble—not the chaos and confusion they are getting from this Palaszczuk Labor government.

This Labor government will be the cause of food shortages in the future. Food producers in the Balonne shire who sell onions and grapes direct to Woolworths and Coles are unsure if they will be able to get their skilled seasonal workers in time for harvest. Without these workers, farmers will have no choice but to leave those crops to rot. Even those who are able to get permits are afraid to use them because the permit does not guarantee entry into Queensland, as this is determined by an emergency officer at the border. Others have been declined, including many in specialised agriculture.

It is no wonder we have the highest unemployment. There is a lack of business confidence in the Labor government's decisions because they have left out postcodes like this and omitted them from the border bubble. What is happening in the Balonne shire is absolutely disgraceful. It is putting a huge

impost on these people and causing chaos. I call on the government to meet with us to provide that briefing because we can sort this out. Unfortunately, there is absolutely no motivation whatsoever from the government to do that.