



Speech By  
**Ann Leahy**


**MEMBER FOR WARREGO**

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Record of Proceedings, 2 December 2020

**MOTION**

**Agriculture Industry**

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (5.29 pm): I am delighted to speak on the original motion moved by the member for Gympie because it is only the LNP who are genuine in their support for agriculture in this state. Yesterday with the budget being handed down, the Palaszczuk Labor government chalked up another agriculture fail. When 67 per cent of Queensland is drought-declared, this Labor government cuts \$44 million from the department of agriculture. This is a disgrace. Coupled with the departmental budget cuts are cuts of nine staff from the department, meaning 53 staff have been cut over five years. Talk about cuts, cuts, cuts from Labor in agriculture. This shows the Labor agriculture minister is failing in his portfolio responsibilities.

The minister failed again this morning when he could not tell the House what year primary producers will be able to use Labor's promised inland freight route. Primary producers in my electorate would like to know, as would the councils and communities from Mungindi, Thallon, St George, Surat, Roma, Injune and all the way to Charters Towers. What are the priorities and projects for this inland freight route?

Out in the regions, they do not call the Labor minister for agriculture a friend because time after time they see the Labor government failing the agriculture sector. They do not see the Labor government supporting innovation in the agriculture sector. They do not see the Labor government that has tried to reduce red or green tape on farmers. They do not see a Labor government fighting for lower electricity costs for farmers. What they do see is the Labor government's callous decision to close the two remaining agricultural training colleges in Emerald and Longreach. Shame. Where will the young people who are passionate and dedicated to agriculture learn the skills of how to shear a sheep or strain up a cluster fence? There are many young people in agriculture who are really passionate and this government has failed agriculture by closing those agricultural colleges.

There is 67 per cent of Queensland that is drought-declared at the present time. After this heatwave, there will be plenty more areas that will feel that they too should be drought-declared. The government should explain where these \$44 million in funding cuts to the department are coming from. Will they be the frontline biosecurity officers who have to deal with the tick outbreaks or, even worse, the anthrax outbreaks, which my electorate has experienced? If you think COVID is difficult, wait until you try to deal with anthrax. Will these funding cuts come from the drought support programs?

We know the government have already proposed to cut back on the freight and stock returning from agistment subsidies when the current drought declarations are revoked. What will they cut next? Will it be the emergency water infrastructure rebate? Contrast this to the LNP, who are genuine in their support for agriculture. The LNP introduced into this House in the last term a private member's bill that clearly outlined our tough stance on the trespass laws to protect farmers from extremists. Some of those farmers who live in my electorate have experienced the repeated trespass on their properties and they

are sick to death of this illegal behaviour which continues to threaten and target them even today. The LNP put forward a solution to supporting farmers but this Labor government did not want to see that private member's bill debated.

It is the LNP that stands shoulder to shoulder with farmers, supporting them every time the Labor government goes out and does those preference deals with the Greens and makes vegetation management laws more restrictive and unfair on our farmers. Through Labor's unfair vegetation management laws, it is now harder for drought-stricken farmers in the mulga lands to feed their starving stock. Pushing mulga is about fodder regeneration, not tree clearing.

It is the LNP that wants to grow agriculture by building dams for both domestic supply and agricultural use. Labor have no plan for water security and no drought policy and they do not see drought as a priority. Labor governments have not built a dam in the regions for 15 years. In fact Labor's record on dams is that they have torn down the dam wall at the Paradise Dam. This Labor government's record on agriculture is an 'F' for fail.