




Speech By
Bart Mellish

MEMBER FOR ASPLEY

Record of Proceedings, 2 December 2020

MOTION

Agriculture Industry

 **Mr MELLISH** (Aspley—ALP) (5.54 pm): I rise to speak on the motion moved by the member for Gympie. Of course, I oppose the motion but support the minister's amendments. I must admit that I was a bit perplexed at the motion moved by the member. Firstly, it does not have the usual 'a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j' structure that we in this House became so used to and fond of. This motion has numbers that actually seem to make a bit of sense! I commend the member for Gympie for at least drafting the motion to be more readable than the motions we saw in the last parliament. Paragraphs 1 to 3 actually seem to make sense, but in paragraph 4 and 5 I thought the member was referring to the last time the LNP was in government, because our farmers are still recovering from that manmade disaster.

The Palaszczuk government is more than happy to stand on its record in agriculture, but it would be more helpful for the House to consider the mess we were left with. Like all things on farms, let's start with biosecurity. Under the LNP, 26 per cent of Biosecurity Queensland staff were shown the door. That is the vote of confidence our primary producers received. Further, those opposite reclassified biosecurity staff as 'non-essential'.

Mr Millar interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order! Member for Gregory, I remind you that you are on a warning.

Mr MELLISH: How about that? Biosecurity staff were not considered essential to the agriculture industry under the LNP.

What did those opposite promise during the election? They promised an additional 10 biosecurity officers. They sacked heaps but then added another 10. People should not listen to what they say; they should look at what they do. That is what the people of Queensland did at the last election. The people of Queensland saw what the LNP did in government and have not believed it since. You would think the LNP would have learned the lessons of the past. One only has to look at what the federal LNP has done recently in terms of how it treats farmers with contempt to see that it has not.

In 2018 they promised a national biosecurity levy on importers to boost our country's fight against pests and diseases. We did not hear much about it. David Littleproud introduced that in 2018, yet quietly in March or May this year they dropped it. There was no explanation. The National Farmers' Federation described the decision as 'not a good look for the government'. It is concerning that the same government now seems to be bumbling and stumbling its way into a trade war—something that would be devastating for primary producers—but we do not hear much about that from those opposite. Farmers can be confident knowing that there are people on this side of the chamber who have their backs on biosecurity. We have stabilised staffing at the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and will continue to work closely with industry to identify biosecurity threats and diseases.

A new industry and government body is now overseeing Queensland's response to the Panama TR4 disease outbreak in Far North Queensland. Our response to this disease is so unparalleled that Colombian government officials have visited us to learn more about how we are containing the disease. We have also been on the front foot against African swine fever, which has devastated pig industries across the world. We got on the front foot by offering \$10 million of concessional interest loans through the Primary Industry Productivity Enhancement Scheme to help prepare our producers. In the budget handed down yesterday, the Treasurer reaffirmed our election commitment to additional cluster fencing in Western Queensland—\$4 million—and Regional Economic Development Grants will be available to producers for cluster fencing—

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Kawana, I am placing you on a warning under the standing orders.

Mr MELLISH: I think we need some cluster fencing for the member for Kawana!

Ask farmers and they will say that lambing rates in fenced areas are going up, goat meat prices are going up and demand is up. I know that the Aspley Dosa Hut goat curry is great. I might get one this weekend. Attacks from wild dogs are down. Farmers want more support from cluster fencing. The Palaszczuk government is only too happy to give it to them, because we know that strong biosecurity makes a strong sheep industry. In fact, good biosecurity makes a strong Queensland agriculture industry.

In yesterday's budget we also reaffirmed our election commitment to provide \$1.4 million in grants to equip local councils, industry groups and nature resource groups to prepare for Panama disease and white spot disease. The LNP has never been a friend to our farmers—sacking staff, opposing action on climate change, supporting failures in trade relations and opposing good policy.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. We have 50 seconds to go, members. I would like to get through it without warning anyone else. Let us hear the remainder of this speech in silence.

Mr MELLISH: Those opposite made a bit of noise about animal activists. The biggest risk to farmers from animal activists is from those opposite.

Ms LEAHY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence and I ask that he withdraw.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order! Member for Aspley, the member has taken personal offence. I ask you to withdraw.

Mr MELLISH: I withdraw. We on this side passed tough laws against animal activists. Those opposite elected the Greens.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr MELLISH: Member for Nanango, it is great to see that your contribution to this House was electing another Greens MP to this parliament. That is a terrible legacy for agriculture in regional and rural Queensland.