



Speech By  
**Christopher Whiting**


**MEMBER FOR BANCROFT**

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Record of Proceedings, 2 December 2020

**MOTION**

**Agriculture Industry**

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (5.24 pm): I rise to speak to the motion moved by the opposition as amended by the minister. I am thrilled that they have put this motion forward for discussion. The motion demonstrates to all Queenslanders that the LNP still has not learnt any lessons from their disastrous time in government, when they tore shreds off those dedicated Department of Agriculture and Fisheries officers who served this state so well. You name it, they cut it when they were on these benches. Biosecurity suffered a 26 per cent cut and fisheries a 28 per cent cut, which was devastating for all those involved and terrible for the proud Queensland farmers whom the LNP still claim to represent. For those opposite to make allegations about the Palaszczuk government's support for drought-affected farmers shows that they are blind, deceptive or have literally forgotten about how budgeting for drought funding works.

For more than a year the LNP has been claiming that the state budget cut funding for drought assistance, and that is absolute rubbish. Not one cent of drought support to our farmers has been cut. It has long been the practice for funding for drought assistance to be funded for a single year in the state budget and not for forward years. That is what happened under the LNP government when the current Leader of the Opposition sat around the cabinet table, and that is what happens now, but of course the corrosive LNP brand of drought politics is not just restricted to the state LNP. Their federal counterparts have much to be ashamed of in this regard as well.

Within months of the election of the Palaszczuk Labor government, the LNP federal government's then agriculture minister, Barnaby Joyce, wrote to us. We all remember Barnaby, a former Queenslander—a former everything, really. After the election he wrote to us saying they would withdraw their 25 per cent contribution to the Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate scheme. Members might recall that the Queensland government provides a 50 per cent rebate on emergency water infrastructure. This is to ensure that our drought-stricken farmers can invest in their properties, making them more drought resilient and providing vital water infrastructure for livestock. But their federal mates defunded their 25 per cent contribution for more than two years. Some 2,600 Queensland farmers missed out on that federal top-up for emergency water infrastructure. Meanwhile, the Palaszczuk Labor government has continued to pay a 50 per cent rebate.

Then came the much vaunted 2018 drought summit, where the federal government made all of its announcements at the start of the summit without hearing a single word from drought-stricken Queensland or any other state. In one of their lauded initiatives, they put the 25 per cent EWIR rebate back on the table. How cruel is it to put it back on the table when they had taken it away in the first place after the election of a Labor government. What did the federal LNP do this year? They cut the 25 per cent rebate again. 'No more money,' they said, and the funding for emergency water infrastructure was solely the state's problem.

After a few months they folded on that when the now federal agriculture minister, David Littleproud, realised that cutting essential drought support to farmers in drought was untenable—but even that was deceptive. The LNP's Minister Keith Pitt has now written to the Queensland government asking us to go halves in their contribution as a contribution. After years of dudding Queensland's drought-stricken farmers the Palaszczuk government has continued with a 50 per cent rebate, and now the feds want a contribution that no other state pays.

When the LNP say they support drought-stricken farmers, this is the kind of support they are giving them. The opposition's motion shows that they have not learnt anything during their time in opposition. They still cannot read the budget papers, they still cannot bring themselves to admit that the Palaszczuk Labor government is getting on with the job and they still cannot admit that one of the best agriculture ministers we have seen is the farmers' friend here, Minister Furner.