




Speech By
Colin Boyce

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Record of Proceedings, 2 December 2020

MOTION

Agriculture Industry

 **Mr BOYCE** (Callide—LNP) (5.39 pm): I rise to support the motion put forward by my colleague the member for Gympie and shadow minister for agriculture, Tony Perrett. The Callide electorate is the sixth biggest electorate in the state. It straddles the Great Dividing Range in Central Queensland. Every community in the electorate—whether it be Chinchilla or Cracow, Baralaba or Bell—is reliant on agriculture.

Over recent times we have seen the mining and resource sector as well as the energy sector play a significant part in shaping our communities and their economies, but agriculture is our base. The farmers, graziers and horticulturists of the Callide electorate produce just about anything people could think of in terms of food and fibre produce. We have some of the largest operations in Australia. The flow-on effects are substantial. Thousands of jobs are created and there are many who are not directly related to agriculture who rely on agriculture for an income. I speak of people who work in the transport and shipping industry, the tourism and hospitality sector, and the commercial and retail sector. Many people owe their businesses and their job existence to agriculture.

In this 57th Parliament once again we see the honourable member for Ferny Grove, Mr Mark Furner, retain the agricultural portfolio, and I congratulate him on his appointment. He has obviously out negotiated and out jostled his colleagues to retain the coveted prize of minister for agriculture. 'Furner the farmer's friend' has been mentioned many times in this House, so I wonder what is exactly so friendly about a \$44 million budget cut to—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Apologies, member for Callide. I am having trouble hearing you over your own colleagues. I would ask those on your left to show you the respect due and hear you in silence.

Mr BOYCE: 'Furner the farmer's friend' has been mentioned many times in this House, so I wonder what exactly is so friendly about a \$44 million budget cut to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. We will also see fewer staff while other departments see an increase in staffing levels. However, it is the heavy hand of austerity that agriculture has to bear, championed by none other than the minister himself, 'Furner the frugal' I say. How can it be that an industry that has kept going and kept paying the bills for Queensland during this COVID-19 era has been so ignored by the government?

What we have is a Labor anti-agriculture agenda to deal with. We have \$90 million allocated in the budget to demolish one of the greatest water assets in the state—Paradise Dam. I might add that this is one of the most reckless and irresponsible decisions I have seen the Labor government make in my time. Where was the honourable minister while this was happening? He was nowhere to be seen. We have also seen the demise of our agricultural colleges at Longreach and Emerald. This is clear evidence that the Labor government is not interested in promoting agricultural education for the coming generation.

We have seen ongoing failures in our biosecurity protocols, failure of the integrity of the tick line, armyworms, prickly acacia, parthenium, giant rat's-tail grass, fire ants and a host of other invasive pest species. What is the minister doing to protect our shores from swine flu, which has been detected in New Guinea, a rowboat ride away from Australia? How can anything be effective with a minuscule budget and a less than adequate staffing level?

If the honourable minister Mr Furner is indeed a friend of the farmer, I charge him with making sure that there are adequate templates, directions and instructions issued to agriculture Queensland to help farmers and graziers navigate the soon to be implemented reef legislation. There are many who have no concept of reef legislation. They know nothing of what is before them. There are people with no mobile phone reception or internet service, people with little or no computer skills. It is the minister's responsibility to make sure the department is across this brief and is most helpful. I wait to see what unfolds.

Queensland agriculture is worth \$18 billion to the economy and employs some 300,000 people throughout the supply chain. Agriculture is the most important, underfunded, understaffed and misunderstood industry we have. Just as it is with coal-fired power, we cannot do without it. I support the motion and I commend it to the House.