




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 5 February 2020

MOTION

Maleny Dairies

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (5.37 pm): I rise to oppose this dangerous motion—

Opposition members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Members to my left, the minister hardly got started.

Mr FURNER: I rise to oppose this dangerous motion from the opposition member for Glass House. The Palaszczuk government has been a strong supporter of the Queensland dairy farmers—a strong supporter. We have been closely engaged with dairy farmers in North Queensland. I want to put on record my thanks to the member for Hill for his part—

Mr Millar interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Gregory, you are warned.

Mr FURNER: I want to put on record our close engagement with the member for Hill in terms of his involvement and assistance, sought from the Palaszczuk government, with the dairy farmers up in that part of the world. I was pleased to be up there with him before Christmas looking at issues associated with the many areas up there concerning drought and also the new code that has been put in place. We have met with retailers in respect of that as well, looking at a path forward to resolve some of those matters.

I, like many Queenslanders, continue to be gobsmacked by just how reckless this LNP can be when it comes to talking down the Queensland economy, Queensland jobs and degrading our proud Queensland agricultural industry. The Queensland dairy industry is doing it tough, and the ongoing drought in this state in some regions is into its seventh year and has been cruel to many producers and has contributed significantly to the pressures on both individuals and the industry as a whole. In that context, it beggars belief that any member of this House, let alone an entire party, would advocate for a hard-won contract with a dairy supplier to be torn up. As difficult as it may seem for the opposition, let us have a look at the facts.

The Metro North Hospital and Health Service awarded a contract to Lactalis Australia—or Parmalat or Pauls—and LD&D Australia—Lion—for the supply and delivery of milk and soft dairy products. Lactalis Australia, or Parmalat, was awarded the majority of that contract. Maleny Dairies was disappointed when they were not successful with the tender, and that is understandable. The opposition saw an opportunity. They jumped out to call for the contract to be scrapped and instead awarded to Maleny Dairies, claiming 13 Queensland dairy farmers had missed out on supplying milk. Lactalis Australia, the long-time maker of Pauls milk, buys its milk from up to 150 Queensland farming families in Central Queensland, the Sunshine Coast, South-East Queensland, Wide Bay, the South Burnett and the Darling Downs. That is who the LNP wants to take this contract from.

The Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation wrote an open letter urging for this not to be used as a political football, but here comes the opposition again to play politics with dairy farmers and their workers. It is not too hard to see the game the opposition is attempting to play by over and over again playing up the fact that the supplier who won the bulk of the contract is French owned and the minor supplier will soon be Chinese owned. It is deeply disturbing to hear the ramping up of rhetoric against foreign investment in Queensland coming from the LNP.

The LNP is demonising French owned Lactalis—a business that still employs more than 600 people across its operations in Queensland—because of its ownership by overseas investors. It is an attack on Queensland workers, an attack on the Queensland economy and an attack on Queensland dairy farmers. Those opposite could not help themselves: rushing to point out a Chinese connection to a small part of the metro north hospitals' milk supply contract because they thought it would somehow outrage people more.

Let me quote a former member of this parliament on a trade and investment trip to China who said, 'China regards Australia as a prime investment destination and my focus for this visit is to leverage this interest.' That was none other than former premier Campbell Newman, the man who slashed and burned his way through Queensland and taught the Leader of the Opposition everything she knows. Foreign investment is good for Queensland, it is good for Queensland's economy and it is good for Queensland jobs. The LNP used to know that. They used to know because Lactalis, then called Parmalat, won the metro north hospitals' milk supply contract under the LNP in 2014. Now the LNP is against foreign investment in Queensland and dog whistling for One Nation votes. That is what they are doing here: dog whistling for One Nation votes.

(Time expired)