



Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Furner**


**MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE**

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Record of Proceedings, 18 March 2020

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **Coronavirus, Agriculture Industry**

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (10.46 am): The Palaszczuk government is on the front foot to minimise the impact of the coronavirus on Queensland's agricultural industries. We listened carefully to industry and acted immediately with a \$3.66 million investment in protecting jobs in Queensland's seafood industry. This has included: waiving quota fees for rock lobster and coral trout fishers for the first six months of 2020 as well as boat licence fees for these and other fisheries like mud crab affected by coronavirus; expansion of the fishery area for the tropical rock lobster fishery area for three months; and rural financial counselling services for commercial fishers and those along the supply chain impacted by coronavirus.

We have begun accepting applications from Queensland agribusiness affected by the outbreak for the government's \$500,000 Market Diversification and Resilience Grants Scheme to tap into new markets. Applications for the first round of these grants close on Monday, 20 April. I strongly urge any agribusiness that has been affected to contact the department as soon as possible.

I note that at the recent meeting of agriculture ministers from around the country Queensland's response to the outbreak was recognised—one that all other states and territories should look upon. We are not resting on our laurels. We are continuing to work with industry. I have convened the Agriculture Coordination Group, comprising industry representatives and department staff. We met last week and again yesterday to discuss ways to protect our food supply chain. There is some concern about how this outbreak may impact labour resourcing in the horticulture industry, and we will continue to work with the Commonwealth on this.

I have written to the federal agriculture minister, David Littleproud, asking him to consider this as a matter of urgency. In Queensland, in some cases backpackers make up 80 per cent of the labour force on farms. Farmers need some clarity about what the federal government will do to help them find staff to harvest crops and feed people through this unprecedented outbreak. We will continue to listen to and work with industry, and we are putting our energy into protecting the jobs of hardworking Queenslanders.

I will have a teleconference with the other agriculture ministers via a special Agmin meeting tomorrow. I will flag the needs of Queensland's primary producers. The Palaszczuk Labor government will always put first people's jobs and growing more jobs for the future. We will fight day and night for Queensland agricultural jobs, and we always will.