




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Agriculture Industry

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (9.55 am): The announcements made by the Premier this week demonstrate clearly the Palaszczuk government's commitment to Queensland's farmers and the broader agricultural sector. We were the first state to declare that agriculture would be an essential industry to get the state through the COVID-19 crisis. This week we have again provided significant support as we identify the agricultural sector as one that will help lead Queensland back to its traditional position of strength.

The global coronavirus pandemic has impacted economies around the world. We know that Australia is not immune and neither is Queensland. That is why we are continuing to manage the health impacts and have started to deliver a plan to unite and recover for Queensland jobs. The announcement of \$12.5 million in additional support has been welcomed by industry stakeholders. Like the Premier, I am thrilled at how closely we have worked with those groups to deliver outcomes for their industry and for Queensland as a whole.

The Palaszczuk government has long been a big supporter of our farmers through research and development, drought support and, of course, our highly successful Rural Economic Development Grants, creating jobs right across the state. The first round of RED Grants created more than 600 jobs through projects that will help agricultural industry businesses to grow. Over the past several weeks, we announced the successful recipients of the second round and a further 600 direct and indirect jobs have been created. Those grants contribute up to \$250,000 in matched funding to agricultural businesses to help them expand and create new jobs. Today I am thrilled to announce that the third round of our Rural Economic Development Grants is now open for expressions of interest, bringing the total investment to \$10 million, which will be distributed throughout regional Queensland.

Last week I had the absolute privilege of visiting some of the RED Grants recipients in the Southern Downs. Kialla Pure Foods is a great Queensland success story that has been able to deliver eight new jobs. That is another success story to come out of COVID-19. The business has increased its job numbers by 300 per cent as a result of the increased interest in cooking among people working from home. My daughter Sally lost her job as a flight attendant because of COVID-19. She now says to me, 'Dad, what do you want for dinner tonight?'

The Carey Bros abattoir at Yangan is a proud family owned business that has been operating since 1944. It has been able to offer up to 16 jobs because of our RED grant. Just outside of Stanthorpe, Spring Creek Seedlings has a massive expansion underway, with a new covered growing area. Peter Burnell told me that without the RED grant that job-creating expansion project probably would not have got off the ground, but will now deliver 20 jobs. At Inglewood Organic, Adam and Katrina are installing a new irrigated cropping area to ensure guaranteed organic feed for the chickens they raise, delivering 13 direct and indirect jobs.

We are delivering a plan to unite and recover for Queensland jobs. Those jobs will be critical to building an even brighter future for Queensland's regions. We have always stood shoulder to shoulder with Queensland farmers and we always will.