




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 4 December 2020

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

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 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferry Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (10.46 am): I rise to speak in support of the appropriation bills and the 2020-21 state budget. Any logical thinking person would know that the global COVID-19 pandemic has dominated 2020, bringing death and disruption to all parts of the world. We have seen cases grow across the globe substantially. Recent deaths in the US have reached 275,201, with alarming estimates that this could reach 400,000 deaths in total by the first quarter of 2021. The total number of cases in the US has reached a staggering 14-plus million.

Conversely, this year the Palaszczuk government, led by the people's Premier, has kept Queensland safe from this insidious pandemic. With the scientific expert advice from the Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young, Queensland has been at the forefront of dealing with the health response.

I know previous speakers, including the last speaker, the member for Mermaid Beach, spoke about a health scare. We merely need to go to the World Wide Web and see the statistics I have just quoted to understand that this is no health scare. This is a real issue affecting the globe. Our health response has shielded Queenslanders from the spread of COVID-19, and with the carefully balanced oversight of our Treasurer's budget Queensland will be guided through the current difficult times to a brighter future.

Notwithstanding that, opposition members, speaker after speaker, have been talking down the Queensland economy and putting consumer confidence at risk. They are just like Campbell Newman when he compared Queensland's economy to Spain when Spain had 25 per cent unemployment. The LNP love bad news for Queensland. They love it. When jobs are lost because of COVID, they cannot wipe the smiles off their faces. When businesses are hurting, we see the gleam in their eyes. When farmers are doing it tough, they sink the boot in and bleat that everything is terrible. When they cannot find enough bad news, they come in here and make it up, like they made up the supposed cuts to drought funding. There are no cuts to drought funding. It is little wonder the LNP executive has called a recent meeting to question what the LNP stands for.

In my electorate of Ferry Grove, ensuring access to a quality education has been a driving passion of mine, and I am proud to say that the Palaszczuk Labor government has delivered in spades. From minor works to major transformational infrastructure projects, this government has delivered \$50 million worth of investment into schools in the Ferry Grove electorate. That is \$50 million driving jobs in our local community, as well as improving learning environments for both our students and our teachers.

The last state budget delivered new classrooms for Newmarket State School and enhanced outdoor learning spaces at Mitchelton Special School and funded ongoing work on the major entertainment and performing arts precinct at Ferny Grove State High School. In addition, the budget will deliver a refurbished hall and classrooms at Mitchelton State High School. I commend the Palaszczuk government and, in particular, the education minister for supporting this funding.

Through the recent campaign we pledged \$5 million for a new school hall for Oakleigh State School and a further \$400,000 for stage 2 of a community hub for Patricks Road State School outside-school-hours care. Of course, this state budget has delivered on those commitments. That is what the Palaszczuk government does: we get on with the job of delivering for the people of Queensland, and the state budget once again delivers for Ferny Grove.

Our ongoing improvements to Samford Road will make a daily difference to many in and around the Ferny Grove electorate. I and many of my constituents are very much looking forward to the Ferny Grove transit oriented development, or TOD, getting underway and creating more jobs in our local area. I cannot overstate the importance of this development to the Ferny Grove electorate and the surrounding region. This project will create 700 jobs during the construction phase and another 700 ongoing jobs once it is complete. That is 1,400 jobs being created in my electorate. This is going to contribute to the prosperity of Ferny Grove for years to come. It is not just the jobs that will provide a benefit to people in my electorate. It is also the more than 400 additional car parks in that development, supported by more than \$9 million from the Palaszczuk government. Ferny Grove is a vibrant community and it continues to be my honour to serve its people and to deliver these outcomes for them.

Turning to my portfolio, the Palaszczuk government has a proud record of investing in my portfolio of agricultural industry development and fisheries and rural communities. It is no wonder that when I travel thousands of kilometres across this wonderful state I am welcomed as 'Furner the farmer's friend'. Like every sector in virtually every nation across the world, our fisheries and agriculture businesses have been doing it tough—really tough. We have stood by farmers. We have stood shoulder to shoulder with them. We were the first state to declare agriculture an essential industry. We backed them to keep supply chains open and, where necessary, to diversify their businesses into other markets. I dare to say that the cooperation between industry and government was unprecedented—a fitting response to the unprecedented times we faced because of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Even as we continue to implement Queensland's plan for economic recovery, we continue in that wonderful, productive spirit of working together for the benefit of all Queenslanders.

I know the Leader of the Opposition in his budget reply speech suggested that we are at war with agriculture in this state. The only war we are in with Queensland's agriculture industry is the one where we stand side by side, fighting shoulder to shoulder and helping our farmers take on the world. Despite what the Leader of the Opposition had to say, we remain steadfastly committed to agricultural research and extension, both directly through our many DAF research facilities and through significant partnerships with industry and the university sector. In fact, the Queensland government's research contribution to Agri-Science Queensland has risen from \$84.9 million in 2014-15 to \$94.3 million in 2019-20.

Agriculture and food production has long been a mainstay of the Queensland economy, and the Palaszczuk Labor government knows the importance of supporting it into the future. We are supporting it for our farmers and fishers. We are supporting it for the many thousands of jobs that rely on it—the supply chain and transport industry jobs, the manufacturing jobs, the export jobs, the retail and restaurant jobs. All of them rely on our food and fibre producers, either in full or in part, to support their businesses and their jobs. The commitments in this state budget will deliver for our state, ensuring we are growing our regions and keeping food and fibre production as a significant driver of our economy and jobs.

One of the things that the Palaszczuk government is rightly proud of is the extent to which we have supported the return of the sheep industry to this state. Multiple investments in cluster fencing to support producers in keeping wild dogs out of their properties are reaping the benefits. We have seen the number of sheep in Queensland almost double to more than 400,000, and lambing rates in those areas have risen from 40 per cent to as high as 90 per cent. We are not done supporting this industry yet. The state budget includes a further \$4 million to be provided in rural agricultural development grants to fund more cluster fencing and other measures to help grow the sheep industry in western and southern Queensland.

On my visits to many rural areas I have seen firsthand the massive difference wild dog fencing makes for sheep. It instils confidence and security, increases productivity and creates employment in our rural communities. That is real investment and real support for the sheep industry because the Palaszczuk government is backing them to succeed.

The budget also commits \$1.4 million for biosecurity grants to equip local councils, industry groups and natural resource groups to prepare for and respond to biosecurity threats. We understand that biosecurity is everyone's business, and our state faces a higher risk of biosecurity incursions than any other Australian state or territory. Our investment in supporting the agriculture sector ensures one of the traditional backbones of the Queensland economy can grow, thrive and support the jobs essential to Queensland's economic recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Palaszczuk government has done important work to ensure that we leave a legacy of sustainable fisheries for our children and our grandchildren. Over recent years we have invested to ensure recreational fishing groups who support our fisheries and help to teach the next generation of recreational fishers how to enjoy this pastime sustainably have received significant support from this government. For several years we had \$100,000 annually in recreational fishing grants for these organisations. This was doubled to \$200,000 in the most recent year. In the state budget we have delivered on our election commitment to offer \$1 million in recreational fishing grants over the next four years. We said we would boost our support for recreational fishing groups and that is exactly what we have done.

The Palaszczuk government's commitment in the 2020-21 budget is to raise the annual amount of grants available to \$250,000 and we will retain that level for a four-year period. This program will cast for activities and projects to enhance sustainable recreational fishing throughout Queensland. With over 900,000 recreational fishers in Queensland, it is no surprise the program attracts so much interest. Recreational fishing is an important driver of jobs in Queensland communities and our COVID-19 economic recovery plan. Our grants program is particularly interested in applications that contribute to the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy target to increase the satisfaction of recreational fishers.

Over four years, we will be investing \$1 million in recreational fishing grants to support learn-to-fish clinics, recreational club activities, restocking and research assistance. It is an important part of ensuring Queensland's fisheries are managed with world's best practice.

The Deputy Speaker has reviewed and approved my speech on the budget for incorporation. As such, I ask that the remainder of speech be incorporated in *Hansard*.

The speech read as follows—

As the Minister for Fisheries, I've been proud to see that we have sustainable fisheries so our children and grandchildren and those who work in the industry can continue bringing home the catch-of-the-day.

Speaker, this State Budget shows the Palaszczuk Labor Government's unwavering commitment to regional Queensland.

When we stand up and say we are delivering infrastructure for Queensland, we mean right across the state.

And when we say we are delivering jobs for Queenslanders, we mean all over the state as well.

The State Budget is not just about dollars and cents. These are strategic investments designed to enhance and make the most of our most vital industries, including agriculture.

Out of the 46,000 jobs being created by our \$14.8 billion infrastructure investment, 28,700 of those jobs will be created outside the Greater Brisbane region.

We have made a \$50 million strategic investment in dropping water prices for irrigators to help our farmers to turbo-boost our economic recovery.

We have made strategic investments in skills, including agricultural skills, in high schools in locations like Roma, and in our TAFE colleges in places like Bundaberg.

These investments look well beyond the headlines of today to make a meaningful difference to our future economy and our future capacity.

Speaker, many Queenslanders—I would even dare to say the vast majority of Queenslanders—support our efforts to ensure animal welfare in this state.

Queensland has the most robust animal welfare laws in the nation, and that is something we should all be proud of.

There are a number of organisations that help to provide that care, the most prominent of course being the RSPCA.

However there are other organisations in our communities that have provided years, sometimes decades of service in this regard.

During the recent election campaign I was pleased to be able to visit the Young Animal Protection Society in the electorate of Barron River with my Ministerial colleague, Minister Crawford.

We were there to commit \$1 million over two years to The Young Animal Protection Society, otherwise known as YAPS, to transform their current facilities.

Speaker, every Member of this place understands the importance of educating our young people. They are our future, they are our hope, and they are a key reason why we fight so hard every day to do better for Queensland.

Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has been tough for everyone to deal with.

Home life, work life and community life has been disrupted and changed in some ways that might take years to feel normal again.

We owe our constituents our best efforts to reinforce their sense of security, their sense of a bright future and their confidence that their Government is getting on with the job of delivering for them.

Whether it is jobs, certainty for business, education facilities, support for agriculture and fisheries, or ensuring our regional communities have a strong voice in Government, this State Budget delivers.

I commend the Budget to the House.