




Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

Record of Proceedings, 2 December 2020

MOTION

Agriculture Industry

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (5.09 pm): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Gympie. Once again we see this Palaszczuk Labor government attacking the primary producers of this state—the hardworking men and women who provide the food and fibre for our state and nation, the people who have been doing the heavy lifting for decades, substantially contributing to the state's economy and supporting regional communities.

The agriculture sector is worth \$18 billion and employs more than 300,000 people throughout the supply chain, with 60,000 of those being directly employed. There is 84 per cent of this state with some type of agricultural activity taking place. This equates to almost 144 million hectares. Of this state's total exports, agriculture accounts for 15 per cent. Now we see the government ripping the heart out of the agriculture sector again—more planned budget cuts for the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in the midst of the ongoing drought, attacks from animal activists increasing the biosecurity risk on farms and the closure of all of the agricultural education facilities in Queensland. The bush bashing started in the Beattie era and continued in the Bligh era, and the Palaszczuk Labor government has revelled in the pain created by this mismanagement of the agriculture department.

Biosecurity breaches are an immense concern for farmers. As the Premier has continually told us she is keeping us safe, where was she and her minister when farmers were trying to keep their stock, equipment, markets and infrastructure safe—safe from the activists who present a constant risk to farmers' livelihoods and to the Queensland economy as they blatantly breach biosecurity protocols which could have devastating consequences? The potential for these trespassers to introduce a disease on farm that could destroy a whole industry overnight seems furthest from this government's mind.

Mr Fumer interjected.

Mr WEIR: The minister seems to find it amusing. I can assure him that the producers out there do not.

Mr Fumer interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Minister, you are warned under the standing orders.

Mr WEIR: The minister promised \$5 million to tackle the prickly acacia problem in the state's north-west. This funding has been withheld. That is an absolute betrayal of those farmers who are battling this noxious weed after devastating floods spread it across a vast area. The number of bureaucrats in Brisbane has increased to over 30,000 since 2015, while the department that supports rural and regional industries has been stripped bare.

It is difficult to understand why the Biosecurity Queensland Ministerial Advisory Committee—a key Queensland industry advisory group set up to discuss biosecurity matters—did not meet for almost two years. This is a very arrogant government. Not only did the advisory committee not meet for two

years whilst Labor were conducting their secret review of the Biosecurity Act and regulations; no meetings were held. Wouldn't you think this would have been an optimum time for meetings to take place given the intended role of this advisory group?

The ongoing drought conditions in Queensland are distressing, with 64.7 per cent of the state as of June 2020 drought declared. Parts of Western Queensland are about to enter their eighth consecutive year of drought. This government promised to reform the drought support program and conduct a review. Five years later we are still waiting. This government has no drought policy and no vision for the future of agriculture. Now there is talk of making cuts to drought freight and fodder subsidies. As we speak, the crops across the Darling Downs are failing. At the end of this week there will be another large failure of a summer crop in this state.

This government has made it painfully obvious that it cares little for the regions or for the primary producers and fishers of this state who are the backbone of our economy. They care about Brisbane and the city-centric people who live there. They take for granted the economic and social contribution of people in the regional areas of Queensland, and I do not see that changing anytime soon.

The minister took the opportunity to criticise the federal government. If it were not for the federal government tax write-off, I do not know what these primary producers, or the businesses that rely on them, would be doing. The minister did not mention his involvement in the ban of the live cattle trade to Indonesia. I note that he did not mention that. He talked about dams. The only contribution this government has made to a dam is pulling down Paradise Dam. This government continues to fail regional Queensland.