




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 14 October 2021

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Border Restrictions; Coronavirus, Testing Centres

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (2.24 pm): A farmer has the faith through his daily efforts the harvest will come. Then one day, almost out of nowhere, it does. That day is upon Southern Queensland. The current harvest is forecast to produce 2.4 million tonnes of grain—wheat, barley, chickpeas and other crops. This 2.4 million tonnes equates to a billion dollars of income for the region. Not only are these farmers on the cusp of providing a significant boost to the domestic and export income for Queensland, they have also sequestered a significant quantity of carbon in that grain.

To harvest this grain many harvesters and equipment are needed from interstate. They cross the border, backwards and forwards, depending on the properties they are working on and when the grain is ripe and the conditions are right. Unfortunately, the delays from Queensland Health in processing specialist and essential worker applications are threatening this billion dollar harvest.

Bill, a farmer from Condamine, has an application that he put in five weeks ago for his contract harvester. Despite letters to the health minister and the Chief Health Officer and follow-up from other departments, we still have no answer on this harvester application. He is not the only one being held up by this incompetent state Labor government.

With such a significant volume of grain in this crop, there is a need for additional grain storage. I am advised that Queensland Health is refusing applications from specialist engineers who work in the agricultural supply chain on the fabrication of grain silos. Why this government would refuse entry to the only two people in Australia who can commission the supply chain equipment is just extraordinary. The grain industry and the supply chain urgently need a workable class exemption for the current harvest and summer crops.

We hear a lot this week from members opposite about vaccination. I have been calling for weeks for pop-up clinics for Tara, Meandarra, Condamine and Moonie. It was only after my persistent calls that we see additional clinics in Dalby, Miles and Chinchilla. Added to the delays in permits for harvesters and the lack of vaccination clinics is the closure of the Dalby Hospital COVID-testing facility. Why would the Palaszczuk Labor government close a 24/7 COVID-testing facility during a pandemic? This seriously impacts the grain harvesters, the holders of freight and logistics passes and locals who are ordered to get tested immediately. Dalby has 24/7 industries but we have no 24/7 public testing. Obviously the people of Dalby and the billion dollar grain harvest is not a priority for the Palaszczuk Labor government.