




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Record of Proceedings, 14 October 2021

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Border Restrictions

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (2.18 pm): I rise to speak about the vexed issue of class exemption border passes and the difficulties they create for my constituents and agribusiness in regional Queensland in general. The Z pass is a fake class exemption for agricultural essential work and is not fit for purpose. It does not consider Queensland agribusinesses that need to go to New South Wales or Victoria for essential work and return home when the work is completed. They cannot leave the border bubble and return if they are using a Z pass.

My constituents who are contract harvesters have lost the first good income in several seasons for this sole reason. They cannot use the Z pass if they need to go and harvest at Narrabri, Moree or Walgett. They cannot return by air because they need to bring the machinery back home with them to harvest at home. They are being sent to the wall as we speak, despite the first big harvest in years.

Then there are constituents like the Chandlers of Barcaldine. Their sheep property has been drought declared since 2014. Like many, they battle to save their breeding stock for the value of their blood lines and so they will have the core of the flock from which to breed back up when the drought breaks. Their breeders have been on agistment in New South Wales. It is spring and lambs are dropping. They need to go down and check on the flock and do essential husbandry such as lamb marking. They cannot get a pass. Yesterday they were told by the department of agriculture to try reapplying for the S pass because the Z pass will not let them return. The Chandlers are sceptical that this will help in any way. Never mind that the Chandlers have had no income for seven years to pay unnecessary wages. Ms Chandler says they will simply be told to hire New South Wales labourers to do the work. She is no doubt right.

The Dingo sawmill provides timber to the underground mines in my electorate. They have critical, special parts that have been uniquely engineered for their saw line and are critical to its continued safe operation. Three workers from the Melbourne engineering works need to bring these parts up to Dingo, install them and calibrate them. Surely this is the definition of an S pass—essential or specialist worker. They are on their fourth application and counting. The last one expired on the Chief Health Officer's desk. It times out every two weeks under the Labor government's system.

We have to get this right. We are in the middle of one of the biggest harvests we have seen for a very long time not only in Queensland but also in New South Wales. I have harvesting contractors who need to get down to Narrabri and Moree to harvest and bring those machines back. This is essential work that they need to do. I call on the minister to work on these exemptions now and allow these people to complete their jobs and get on with working.