




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Longreach Pastoral College

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (2.18 pm): I rise to condemn the agriculture minister's disgraceful response in question time yesterday about the future of the Longreach Pastoral College. The minister seems to think this issue is funny—that it is an opportunity to have a chuckle and a wink. I guess we should not be surprised by the minister's antics, after all he has form—plenty of form—when it comes to hurting agriculture.

Who could forget that he sat beside federal Labor agriculture minister Joe Ludwig in the Senate and shut down the live cattle trade; that he sat in this chamber and voted in draconian and mean vegetation laws to stop the expansion of agriculture; that he reneged on a promise of \$5 million in funding to eradicate prickly acacia in the Channel Country; and that he introduced regulation after regulation on farmers and drowned them in red tape? He just seems to think this is some sort of funny joke.

Let me tell the House that this is not a joking matter for the people of Longreach. It is not a joking matter to me, as their representative. His response was an insult to agriculture and an insult to Longreach. The day before, Queensland's peak producer group AgForce publicly asked the minister to please retain this one last college. AgForce wants the Longreach Pastoral College restored to its original purpose—workforce training for the agricultural industry.

The Remote Area Planning and Development Board has developed a plan for exactly how that can be done, but this so-called minister for agriculture has refused to fund this business case. AgForce Sheep and Wool President Mike Pratt has said it is imperative that the Palaszczuk government does not sell this valuable campus. Mr Pratt says AgForce surveys show a huge demand for broadacre, agricultural training in northern Australia. This makes the Longreach Pastoral College a truly viable option that is desperately needed in the west and in the north. Instead, this minister tried to flog it off to the Longreach Regional Council. The mayor publicly announced that ratepayers could afford it.

So, as I asked yesterday, what is the plan now? If the minister has no answer, let me give him one. Take AgForce's advice and fund the RAPAD business case. Restore the college to its original purpose. When the drought breaks, the western wool industry will feel the full benefit of the investment in exclusion fencing. We need to get this going. Where are we going to get the wool classers, the roustabouts, and the paddock and shed workers? Every farmhand has to be trained in on-farm workplace safety, even before they can learn on the job.

Watching the minister's glee as he made fun of the matter yesterday reminded me of his tin-eared photo-op in December 2019, smiling as he padlocked the gates. I show the photo here and I do table it. This is the minister's response to agriculture in Queensland—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Table it please, member.

Mr MILLAR:—shutting the gates and getting a photo-op—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Table it. Do not use it as a prop.

Mr MILLAR: Watching the minister's glee as he made fun of the matter yesterday reminded me of his tin-eared photo-op. He is too tin-eared for a career in comedy. He should get on with his job and open the Longreach Pastoral College.

Tabled paper: Photograph depicting the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities, Hon. Mark Furner [1968](#).

(Time expired)