




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 10 March 2021

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cyclone Niran; Western Queensland, Grasshoppers

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferry Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (9.59 am): Mother Nature at times deals a cruel blow to our wonderful Queensland farmers. We have seen the ongoing drought, we have seen the monsoon event over two years ago and now we have seen significant impacts up north as a result of Cyclone Niran. On Saturday I visited Innisfail to see the damage firsthand. It was clear from the air flying into Innisfail that there were large areas of banana plantations that had been devastated.

On the ground I was pleased to accompany Australian Banana Growers Council chairman, Stephen Lowe, to visit two producers who had suffered significant damage to their properties, one of whom I visited just over 12 months ago. They face a challenging period to get back on their feet, with much of the winter crop lost and major disruption to their operations. The producers I met with faced different challenges, but they are fighting. They are fighting to do what they have to do. They are fighting to keep their staff going because they are going to need them. They are also fighting for their futures. I could see the determination in their faces and hear the passion in their voices. They are hurting. They are hurting so much, and we are standing shoulder to shoulder with them.

I also need to acknowledge work of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries staff who were on the ground quickly at the time of the event to begin assessing the damage and providing support. I am pleased to see that category B assistance for impacted primary producers has been activated to provide up to \$5,000 for freight costs and low-interest loans of up to \$250,000.

The damage has occurred over a wide area, with that assistance activated across the Cassowary Coast, Cairns, Hinchinbrook, Mareeba and Tablelands. Damage and loss estimates from industry have been suggested at up to \$150 million. We are exploring all avenues for providing further levels of assistance to our growers. Now is a time when Queenslanders need to continue to support our growers—an industry worth \$600 million and supplying 95 per cent of the nation with fantastic bananas. I enjoy Queensland bananas on a very regular basis and I am sure every member of this House will continue to encourage their constituents to buy Queensland bananas all year round.

I was also privileged on Saturday morning to visit Winton and see some of the impacts of grasshoppers being experienced there—

Mr Millar: About time!

Mr FURNER: I do not think Winton is in your electorate.

Mr Millar: It is in my electorate!

Mr FURNER: There you go. Anyway, it was great to be there and in several other regions of the state. I held discussions with producers and Mayor Gavin Baskett and some of his councillors. I want to thank Gavin for the pen he gave me while I was there—one of his new additions.

I am pleased to report that as a result of work done, the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority has now issued an emergency-use permit for an appropriate chemical that could be used for spraying to keep grasshopper numbers under control. I table that permit.

Tabled paper: Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority: Permit to allow emergency use of a registered Agvet chemical product for control of grasshoppers in pasture, Permit Number—PER90787 [282](#).

I would also like to thank the working group and producers for their efforts in getting this approval with short notice.