




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 17 June 2021

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (3.11 pm): I rise to speak in support of the appropriation bills for 2021-22. 2020 was a year like no other. The COVID-19 global pandemic wreaked havoc on all aspects of our way of life. The pandemic is not over, as we all know. That message has been made especially clear in the last few weeks, with the recent COVID-19 outbreak in Victoria. While the vaccine rollout continues, there is much uncertainty about what lies ahead for Queenslanders. That is why the budget handed down this week by the Treasurer is so important. It provides more certainty in uncertain times.

The state budget shows the Palaszczuk Labor government's unwavering commitment to regional Queensland. There is renewed investment in the Bruce Highway. There is joint funding for the inland freight route between Charters Towers and New South Wales. Some 61 per cent of our \$14.7 billion capital program next financial year will be spent in the regions of Queensland. There will be strategic investments in skills, with more than \$7 million for agricultural training centres in TAFEs in Toowoomba, Bundaberg, Cannonvale and Bowen. There will be \$70 million for local water supplies through Building our Regions. These investments look well beyond the headlines of today to make a meaningful difference to our future economy and our future capabilities.

Let's compare that to the opposition. They say that they are the party of the bush. Their track record speaks for itself. Their time on the government benches saw widespread cuts to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. More than 600 positions were cut. The people of the Queensland bush were bushwhacked by the LNP—and they have never forgotten.

I see that scientists have recently discovered dinosaur bones at Eromanga. They are really the bones left over from the Nationals, the party that used to stand up for the bush.

Ms Camm: We're still here. We're not going anywhere!

Mr FURNER: Some dinosaurs are still there opposite! Queenslanders know that Labor is the true party for the bush. After all, Barcaldine—or Barky, as most of us on this side know it as—is the birthplace of the Australian Labor Party.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr FURNER: Working for and backing the people of the bush is in our DNA. I am pleased that those opposite have finally woken up. The Palaszczuk government has a proud record of investment—

Mr Saunders interjected.

Mr Millar interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Order! Pause the clock. Member for Maryborough and member for Gregory, cease your quarrelling.

Mr FURNER: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for your protection. The Palaszczuk government has a proud record of investing in the portfolios of agricultural industry development and fisheries and rural communities. There is a \$523 million budget for my portfolio—another half a billion dollars allocated for Agriculture and Fisheries—the third in a row from the Palaszczuk government.

I note that already AgForce president Georgie Somerset, a great advocate and good friend of the Palaszczuk government, has welcomed our commitment to improving, expanding and reforming our drought support program. I also want to acknowledge a very close of mine Will Wilson, AgForce cattle board president. He has also acknowledged how closely this government works with industry to grow our agriculture sector. It is little wonder that when I travel the thousands of kilometres throughout the regions of this magnificent state I am called 'Furner the farmers' friend'.

When it comes to jobs in regional Queensland and for the agriculture industry, this budget delivers in spades. This government will deliver a fourth round of our Rural Economic Development Grants. RED Grants offer co-contribution grants to agribusiness projects to strengthen primary production sectors and bolster rural communities. In the three rounds so far we have backed 45 businesses the length and breadth of this great state. That has created 1,800 jobs in our regions—meaningful jobs. The grants assist businesses like Marto's Mangoes in Bowen which created 62 jobs with its expansion that allows it to measure the maturity of each fruit, ensuring each mango sent to market is at its peak. Kenilworth Dairies is another RED Grants recipient and agribusiness success. The Palaszczuk government backed them to establish their own bottling plant, and in the process another 24 jobs have been created. The member for Nicklin is very supportive of this. It is clear that ag businesses want this scheme to continue. That is why we will deliver another round to create at least 600 jobs across Queensland.

The Palaszczuk government has delivered in spades in my electorate of Ferny Grove since 2015. From minor works to major transformational infrastructure projects, this government continues to invest in my electorate. I am pleased to confirm that the government's investment in the future of Ferny Grove will continue. Some \$9.76 million will be invested in schools across the electorate, for new construction and refurbishment. This is investment in our future generations, giving our kids the best chance to grow and learn in quality schools. I ask that the remainder of my speech be incorporated. It has been provided to and approved by the Deputy Speaker.

Mr Millar interjected.

Ms Fentiman interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. Member for Gregory, you are warned. Attorney-General, you are not far off it.

Mr FURNER: I concur with the comments made by other speakers about Peggy. Peggy was a very close friend of mine. He is missed.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: In accordance with standing orders, I note that your speech has been reviewed by the Speaker's office for incorporation.

The speech read as follows—

But this budget also builds on significant investment in road and transport infrastructure.

Funding has been confirmed for intersection upgrades and safety improvements along Samford Road.

And we have confirmed our significant investment in Ferny Grove Transit Oriented Development, or TOD.

Like my constituents I cannot wait for work to start in coming weeks on the TOD.

This project will create 700 jobs during the construction phase, and another 700 ongoing jobs once it is complete.

That's 1400 jobs being created in my electorate which is going to contribute to the prosperity of Ferny Grove for years to come.

That's what the Palaszczuk Government does. We get on with the job of delivering for the people of Queensland and the State Budget once again delivers for Ferny Grove.

Ferny Grove is a vibrant community, and it continues to be my honour to serve its people and to deliver these outcomes for them.

Portfolio

Speaker, our fisheries and agriculture businesses did it tough in 2020.

But the Palaszczuk Government stood by producers.

We were the first state to declare agriculture an essential industry and we backed them to keep supply chains open.

Our Plan for Economic Recovery included support to help businesses diversify into other markets; to embrace digital innovation and to reinvigorate trade relationships through virtual missions to some of our biggest trading partners like Japan

Speaker, what this Budget does is give our producers more certainty in a post-COVID world.

We are backing our farmers and fishers to do what they do best—to grow the food and fibre we need.

To expand and be more productive and to create the many thousands of jobs that rely on Queensland agriculture.

The supply chain and transport industry jobs. The manufacturing jobs. The export jobs. The retail and restaurant jobs.

All of them rely in part on our food and fibre producers either in full or in part to support their businesses and their jobs.

And when it comes to jobs in regional Queensland and for the agriculture industry this Budget delivers.

One of the things that the Palaszczuk Government is proud of is our support of the sheep industry in Queensland.

Multiple investments in cluster fencing to support producers in keeping wild dogs out of their properties are reaping the benefits.

We have seen lambing rates in Western Queensland rising by as much as 90 per cent.

And we are not done supporting this industry yet.

The State Budget includes a further \$4 million to be provided in Rural Agricultural Development Grants to fund more cluster fencing and other measures to help grow the sheep industry in Western and Southern Queensland.

On my visits to rural areas, I've seen firsthand the massive difference wild dog fencing makes for sheep.

It instils confidence and security, increases productivity, and creates employment in our rural communities.

It was only last month that I caught up with Jed Marks from Savages Butchers in Longreach who told me that because of this government's investment in cluster fencing that he's been able to put on extra workers.

That is real investment, real support for the sheep industry because the Palaszczuk Government is backing them to succeed.

Speaker, unlike the Commonwealth, the Palaszczuk Government's commitment to good biosecurity is rock solid.

We know that Queensland bears the brunt of plant and animal biosecurity threats and we have not shied away from our responsibility.

This budget commits additional investment in Biosecurity Queensland of \$8.8 million over four years.

There's support too for our pork industry—African Swine Fever is still a very real threat and we don't want to see this disease in Queensland.

That's why there'll be additional future funding for prevention and preparedness on top of our current commitments.

There's a further \$3 million over two years to support the response to Fall Armyworm threats.

While the LNP in Canberra dithers on biosecurity, the Palaszczuk Government is giving our farmers certainty on biosecurity.

Speaker, the Palaszczuk Government has done important work to ensure we leave a legacy of a sustainable fishery for our children and our grandchildren.

We have delivered on significant reforms to the sector, in close consultation with commercial and recreational fishers along the way.

But the work is not over yet—that is why this budget provides an increased investment of \$42.5 million over the next four years to continue the Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy.

This is helping build a world-class fisheries management system.

Over recent years we have invested to ensure recreational fishing groups, who support our fisheries and help to teach the next generation of recreational fishers how to enjoy this pastime sustainably.

For several years we had \$100,000 annually in recreational fishing grants for these organisations.

We are now offering \$250,000 in Recreational Fishing Grants over the next four years.

We said we would boost our support for recreational fishing groups and that is exactly what we have done.

With over 900,000 thousand of recreational fishers in Queensland, it's no surprise the program attracts so much interest.

Speaker, the vast majority of Queenslanders—support our efforts to ensure animal welfare in this state.

Queensland has the most robust animal welfare laws in the nation, and that is something we should all be proud of.

But we know community expectations change and that's why we are reviewing the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001.

We have had over 2,000 submissions and I am sure that the new Act will again be nation-leading.

Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has been tough for everyone to deal with.

Because of the strong leadership of our Premier and the Treasurer, Queensland is emerging from the pandemic in a strong position.

This budget will give Queenslanders confidence that their Government is getting on with the job of delivering for them.

Whether it is jobs, certainty for business, education facilities, support for agriculture and fisheries, or ensuring our regional communities have a strong voice in Government, this State Budget gives Queenslanders more certainty in uncertain times.

I commend the Budget to the House.