




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Agriculture Industry

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferry Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (10.10 am): Throughout this COVID-19 pandemic the Palaszczuk government has backed our farmers to the hilt to do what they do best. Through our Agricultural Coordination Group, our #pickqld campaign and our Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network, we have helped our farmers access the labour they need and addressed a whole range of other COVID related issues. Our strong border measures have helped keep delta out of Queensland, keeping Queenslanders safe and protecting our economy. Our economy is strong because the Premier has kept us safe and protected our way of life.

Since 2015 we have supported farmers through three rounds of Regional Economic Development grants that created around 1,800 regional jobs and put \$10 million into regional economies. We provided businesses with grants, matched by co-contributions from the applicants, for projects that created employment and generated projects in the regions. Kialla Pure Foods near Toowoomba, one of Australia's leading organic grain processors, was given a grant to install a new mixer and mixing system. During the early part of the pandemic Kialla experienced a 300 per cent increase in demand for their products. They met this demand because of the new equipment they installed with the RED grant and they hired an additional six people. More than 1,800 jobs were created through our Regional Economic Development grants in the last term of the parliament.

I am proud to say that, thanks to the state budget delivered by the Treasurer this year, we will be investing another \$3.3 million in a further round of Rural Economic Development grants. We will once again back our producers by opening doors to new markets in Asia, Europe and other parts of the globe. Because of our support, producers have the confidence to invest and grow their businesses. I have travelled this state listening to our farmers and other businesses in the food supply chain, and none of them have a bad word to say about Rural Economic Development grants. This is an important program for Queensland agriculture, and I expect to make announcements on opening applications soon.