




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 24 February 2022

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Agriculture Industry

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (2.16 pm): A new parliamentary year gives me the opportunity to update the House on how the Palaszczuk government continues to work with primary producers to deliver Queensland's economic recovery after the Omicron wave. Right from the start of the pandemic, our agriculture coordination group made sure critical issues were presented directly to government and then responded to in a timely fashion. Freight issues, workforce issues and logistical issues were all met head-on by this government and industry together.

What support have Queensland farmers had from Canberra? They are still at the bus stop waiting for the federal LNP government to arrive. Take, for example, the new agriculture visa. This visa has had more announcements than a Johnny Farnham concert. How many times have we heard the Nationals talk this up? In 2018 it was announced with much fanfare and again year after year after year. Then Minister Littleproud proudly told us that the scheme would be up and running before Christmas 2021—not Christmas this year, but last year. Still no country has signed up to this program.

Who is to blame? It is not David Littleproud. He told us that the only thing standing in the way of thousands of these workers coming to work on Australian farms was his cabinet colleague, foreign minister Marise Payne. Minister Littleproud must have been a bus driver in a previous life because he is adept at throwing people under the bus. This week it is the foreign minister and previously it has been the AWU. He never fails to blame the states for a job he is responsible for.

When we had quarantine arrangements based on health advice, Minister Littleproud claimed there were 20,000 Pacific island workers just waiting to be waved through to work on farms. The quarantine restrictions are gone, so where are they? When it comes to backing our farmers, David Littleproud and his LNP colleagues are still at the depot, struggling to get the bus going. In contrast, Queensland has led the nation in bringing in Pacific island workers. More than 5,200 workers have quarantined on farm and in regional industry-led quarantine facilities. While we wait with bated breath for the Commonwealth's Pinkenba quarantine facility, the Wellcamp Regional Accommodation Centre is up and running ready for whatever the future holds in this pandemic.

Our work in tandem with the agriculture industry speaks for itself. The latest AgTrends data shows the gross value of production this financial year is expected to be \$20.6 billion—an increase of nearly \$2 billion since the start of the pandemic. When it comes to Queensland agriculture our farmers are all aboard with the Palaszczuk Labor government. We will continue supporting them as we have done from the outset, whether it be through times of extreme weather conditions or drought conditions or support growing their farms and supporting jobs on their land. The Palaszczuk Labor government is there working with them hand in hand.

(Time expired)