



Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 23 June 2022

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (5.24 pm): Before I make my contribution on the appropriation bills, I table a response to petition 3724-22.

Tabled paper: Response from the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities (Hon. Furner), to an ePetition (3724-22) sponsored by the member for Hinchinbrook, Mr Dametto, from 617 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure the current allocation of commercial and recreational Spanish mackerel quotas remain unchanged [920](#).

The 2022 budget delivered by the Treasurer this week stands alone among Queensland state budgets. This budget is one for the ages—one that will stand out, as when we pushed through the difficult times presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and grasped the incredible opportunities that Queensland has. Of course, the first and greatest investment is in health because that underpins so much of what we want to deliver for this state. With a nation-leading health system we can build the future that Queenslanders want—an ambitious future, a successful future and a future that Queenslanders will be proud of.

Of course, our industry partners in the agricultural sector know only too well how hard the Palaszczuk government is working to ensure that good health outcomes support our world renowned farmers. Throughout the height of the COVID-19 pandemic we worked shoulder to shoulder, helping to implement the life-saving measures supported by the health advice while ensuring that the agricultural industry could get on with what it does best—feeding the nation and the world with the best produce.

We safely supported more than 5,000 Pacific workers to quarantine on Queensland farms to provide the labour that was so desperately needed through the darkest days of the pandemic. We have been side by side with our farmers through the pandemic, through drought, through the monsoon trough in the Far North and through the flooding events that have hit so hard in several regions—some of them more than once.

We know that the trials and tribulations of farming life can take a toll, and not just a physical one. That is why I am so proud of this budget's investment in a \$1.6 billion package over five years to focus on mental health, addiction, substance abuse and suicide across Queensland. This is an essential commitment to support communities in agricultural regions and right across Queensland.

Of course, the Palaszczuk Labor government has once again delivered in spades for the agriculture sector in Queensland, with a \$608 million investment to support this essential industry. Our farmers are the best in the world—we know that in the Palaszczuk government—but without good health we cannot be our best. That is why when it comes to health we are delivering better services for every

Queenslander with the record investment in new hospitals, in hospital upgrades, in more health staff and in the health services that will make sure that the right health services are there when Queenslanders need them.

I know it might be a little hard to hear for those opposite, but the 2022 state budget clearly shows the Palaszczuk Labor government is the best friend Queensland farmers have ever had. We have had the courage to take on once-in-a-generation reforms to our drought support programs, and this budget backs those reforms by ensuring the money is there to make those reforms a reality. We have \$79.6 million in drought assistance programs allocated over the next four years. Importantly, we have also set aside \$150 million in drought preparedness and assistance loans over the next three years.

These reforms and this funding fundamentally shift the balance towards preparedness for drought rather than only offering support once a drought crisis is declared in a region. As promised under this reform process, primary producers accessing the previous assistance can continue to do so while their region remains drought-declared. The new preparedness funding is critical to ensuring primary producers can upgrade water infrastructure and be ready for the next drought long before their area has been drought-declared. For the first time, this support is available to the horticulture industry—in your area, as you would know, Mr Deputy Speaker Lister—making a groundbreaking difference to those farmers. This approach has been supported by industry because we worked side by side with industry to develop and then implement it.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic members have heard Palaszczuk government ministers talking time and again about the health advice we received and followed to keep Queenslanders safe. The science, and our commitment to following it, saved lives across this state. Like many Queenslanders, I am extremely grateful to our Premier for having the courage to make the tough decisions.

In agriculture we, too, follow the science to make sure our farmers can be their absolute best and stand on the world stage. Our Department of Agriculture and Fisheries has a great reputation for its work in agricultural research. My thanks go to all of the researchers and support staff who apply their knowledge and insight for the benefit of Queensland farmers every single day.

Including external contributions, next financial year we will oversee \$140 million in research and extension work—\$140 million. That is a massive ongoing investment in the future of agriculture in this state. We should be incredibly proud of what we achieve through this work. This is everything from researching new varieties of strawberries on the Sunshine Coast to tackling tropical plant pests and diseases in Far North Queensland. This is another way we are providing better services to our agricultural sector to the benefit of all Queenslanders.

This budget takes important steps to protect our agricultural industry through investing \$1 million in round 7 of the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative and strengthening our biosecurity network through prevention, preparedness, and response and recovery measures. We are protecting the great lifestyle Queenslanders enjoy by investing \$37.1 million to open a new front in the war on fire ants.

This year's budget will deliver in spades for the electorate of Ferny Grove. It delivers for health. It delivers for our schools. It delivers for transport. It delivers for our roads. The record \$9.78 billion increase in health spending includes a massive expansion of the Prince Charles Hospital and a nation-first Queensland Cancer Centre.

Since 2015, Ferny Grove electorate schools have benefited from a record investment of over \$50 million. This budget puts that figure well over the \$60 million mark. It delivers on my election commitments and provides the education infrastructure we need to meet the future head on. Ferny Hills State School, which turned 52 this year, will get a \$1.2 million investment to replace its ageing amenities block. This is a great budget, a true Labor budget, a Labor budget for the times.

In conclusion, I will respond to the member for Gympie's comments in his contribution. In my portfolio, I listened carefully to the contribution of the member for Gympie. I cannot let that nonsense pass without comment. The numbers speak for themselves—\$408 million in the agriculture budget under the LNP when they were last in government compared to \$608 million in the agriculture budget under Labor. That is a 49 per cent increase since the last LNP budget. In respect of the devastating performance of the LNP in government, they slashed 600 jobs in my department, including 26 per cent from biosecurity and 28 per cent from fisheries.

The Deputy Speaker has reviewed and approved my budget speech for incorporation. As such, I ask that the remainder of my speech be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*.

The speech read as follows—

Ferny Hills State School will also receive an extra \$545 thousand to complete the much-needed renovations to D Block—which are currently underway as we speak.

Likewise, Oakleigh State School, nestled in the heart of Ashgrove, has been experiencing a flowering of student numbers in recent years as young families return to the suburb. The Palaszczuk Government has been building new classrooms at the school to keep up with that increased demand.

At the 2020 election, I made a commitment to the students and parents of Oakleigh State School that a re-elected Palaszczuk Government would build a new hall for the school in this term. This year's budget provides the down payment on that promise with work expected to begin later this year. When I make a promise, I deliver.

Likewise, this budget delivers the final payment for the expansion of parking at the Ferny Grove Transit Oriented Development. Ferny Grove Central, as the project is now called, will deliver a 42% expansion in parking and is providing much needed local jobs now during construction and into the future once the entire complex is completed.

This budget also delivers the funding for the Glenholm Street/Samford Road intersection project—which I am told has exploratory works beginning next week. I committed to that project in 2018 and this budget delivers on that commitment.

Speaker, the school commitments made in my electorate of Ferny Grove have been delivered by the Palaszczuk Labor Government. Just like the promise I made to Patricks Road State School in 2019 to deliver funding for an extension to their existing hall. This budget delivers \$500,000 to that project—with construction due to commence in the second half of this year.

Cross River Rail and the Rail Revolution investments announced in the budget will see the gaps in the Ferny Grove Line timetable closed and improvements to rail safety and comfort rolled out over the next few years.

And our local roads have not missed out either. The Palaszczuk Government is working with the Moreton Bay Regional Council to fix the Hutton Road, Plucks Road, Caesar Road black spot intersection.

Community Centres have been the cornerstone for our communities for people experiencing homelessness, domestic violence, and social isolation—especially since the start of 2020. This year's budget provides a massive funding boost to our community centres with our local Picabeen Community Centre receiving more than double its regular funding for the next four years!

This is what Labor Governments do. We make promises and we deliver on them, and this budget certainly delivers for the Ferny Grove Electorate.

Back on matters related to my portfolio, as I mentioned this Budget opens a significant new front in the war on Red Imported Fire Ants.

This is a pest that is a threat to the outdoor lifestyle that we know and love in Queensland, so this is a critical investment in the steps we are taking towards eradication.

The Budget includes \$37.1 million over five years, starting in the current financial year, to open a new front in the war on fire ants in South East Queensland.

This new effort will be focussed on the areas of heaviest infestation to reduce Fire Ant numbers until the eradication effort reaches those areas.

This is another measure to protect the great lifestyle that we have in Queensland. It's worth fighting for, and we are investing in that fight.

Speaker, the Palaszczuk Government has been committed to supporting communities in the fight against feral pests that impact on our agricultural areas.

I am pleased, as I mentioned, to see the further \$1 million committed in the Budget for a seventh round of the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative, which has been so important to our local governments.

It is never too soon to remind Queenslanders that biosecurity is everybody's responsibility and I am glad we can provide this funding to fight feral pests.

Speaker, many stakeholders have spoken to me about the need for a consistent supply of agricultural labour. Just last week it was great to meet with Nathan Baronio from the Granite Belt Growers Association, such a passionate advocate for the industry. He talked about the demand for workers in his region and expressed his association's desire to be at the cutting edge of solutions. It is important in all parts of the state and we continue to work with industry on workable solutions in both the short and long term. That's why I am so pleased that the Palaszczuk Government's Budget includes \$2.6 million to support the Commonwealth's Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme helping our farmers get the workers they need.

We know it is not the whole solution but it is an important part of the puzzle and we will continue to work side by side with our farmers and food production industries to support them.

Speaker, Tuesday's State Budget included funding to support a wide range of initiatives including:

- a network of smart farms, an agtech roadmap and better biosecurity preparedness;
- support to tackle Panama TR4 disease in banana crops;
- ongoing Sustainable Fisheries reforms;
- and \$1 million over two years to help the Queensland Country Womens Association to upgrade their facilities.

Speaker, overall we are talking about a \$608 million budget for Agriculture and Fisheries, a massive investment in the future of primary industry in this state.

Since the Palaszczuk Government came to office in 2015 we have delivered a 49 per cent increase in the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Budget—49 per cent.

Speaker, I am proud to be standing here as the Farmer's Friend, delivering once again for Queensland's agriculture sector. The Palaszczuk Labor Government has always stood by our farmers, and we will always stand by our farmers because that is who we are.

We are delivering good jobs in the agriculture sector, we are delivering better services to regional Queenslanders and we are protecting a great lifestyle that Queenslanders love and deserve.