



Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 16 August 2022

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

State Development and Regional Industries Committee, Report

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (3.22 pm): It gives me great pleasure to respond to the estimates report of the State Development and Regional Industries Committee. I thank the chair, the member for Bancroft, and all of the members of the committee for their considered questions on agriculture, fisheries and forestry in the state.

In June the Palaszczuk government delivered a \$608 million investment in Queensland's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries to maintain their position as a major employer and world leader. Drought support and preparedness, research and extension services, and tackling major pests featured prominently in this budget. It included \$79.6 million over four years to continue the drought assistance programs and \$150 million over three years to be set aside for drought preparedness and emergency drought assistance loans. It included over \$140 million of the government's partnership funds in 2022-23 to drive productivity and innovation in Queensland's livestock, aquaculture, cropping, horticulture, forestry, timber and food processing industries through world-class research, development and extension.

We have committed \$37.1 million to invest over five years to open a vital new front in the war on red imported fire ants with a Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce. That is new money to complement the ongoing National Fire Ant Eradication Program, to which we have continued our commitment. Also in the biosecurity space, we have invested a further \$1 million to deliver round 7 in the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative. There is up to \$2.6 million in 2022-23 for the implementation of the Australian government's Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme. Of course, at estimates we announced more than \$4 million to continue the magnificent work of the rural jobs initiative, which includes the Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network to keep finding good workers and good jobs in agriculture and related industries. That announcement has been well received right across the horticultural sector, which understands the importance of that particular initiative. Overall, it is a budget that supports good jobs and better services in the agricultural industry and the great lifestyle of rural and regional Queensland.

It would be remiss of me not to comment on the opposition's dissenting statements of reservation contained within the committee's report. In fact, this was more painful than watching Peter Dutton eat a dagwood dog at the Ekka. It is clear that the only thing that the opposition learnt from the Ekka was 'all

bag, no show'. They claimed that there are cuts to the agriculture budget, but our 2022-23 budget is \$608 million. Conversely, when we look at the previous LNP government they allocated \$522.6 million so I beg to differ with their comments on cuts when we look at that contrast. For the record, there are now more staff in DAF than when we came into government. In fact, when the last LNP government was in power they sacked more than 600 agriculture workers from DAF. That is the figure that they are responsible for. That is their legacy. I am not saying that the LNP needs to buy the Sesame Street show bag for next year, but they really do need to learn how to count.

Biosecurity should be a bipartisan measure. Once again I will reassure the House that we are prepared when it comes to biosecurity and we will continue to work with the industry on this crucial issue. When it comes to the fire ant program, the LNP cannot get their head around the fact that there is an eradication program as well as a suppression program prior to eradication. That is all new money—\$37.1 million. The LNP claimed that we renamed the eradication program a suppression program and that we have given up the fight. Far from it. It is hard to tell if the LNP is genuinely not that bright or just ignorant of the facts when it comes to an SDS and how to read one.

Another line that the LNP cast on fisheries was that a closure to Spanish mackerel was ruled out at estimates when, in fact, the decision was already published on the website and open for consultation. From wood chop to not much chop, the LNP still cannot understand how forestry works in this state. It is no wonder that the LNP has not been a main-ring attraction for the punters for the last few years: can't count, can't read and a leadership that is a cross between the dodgem cars and the Vomitron. I am asked better questions at the Ekka, and I was there just about every day. You could try to find a member of the LNP there. I know some of them fronted up for a free breakfast at the Rural Press Club, but other than that you would barely see them in the crowd. They are hardly ever seen there. They are missing in action all of the time.

Mr Mickelberg interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Walker): Order, member for Buderim.

Mr FURNER: The big mouth from Buderim was missing in action.

(Time expired)

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, take your seat.

Mr Furner: He could not be heard over the crowds.