




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Ekka

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (2.15 pm): This year the Ekka returned. The Ekka is living proof that Queensland has a great lifestyle, where the country meets the city and the city meets the country. I enjoyed my time visiting many exhibitors and seeing the great work they are doing. I will start with the Queensland government pavilion, where it is clear the Palaszczuk government's ongoing investments are delivering better services.

I want to also thank DAF for promoting agriculture jobs to the visitors as in Queensland there are many good jobs to be had that assist our primary producers. The Queensland Beekeepers' Association were also there promoting Queensland honey and pollination services. They went through 8,000 samples of honey on the first day. I pay particular tribute to Jo Martin and Jacob Stevens from the association whose dedication at the Ekka helped more people understand the challenges that the industry faces as well as the myriad opportunities.

Other exhibitors included Cotton Australia with their virtual reality experiences and AgForce which offered such a diverse range of options across their stall. Of course I dropped in to the *Queensland Country Life* stand and thanked longstanding journo Mark Phelps from the QCL for the dogs he gave me. My children will love those. I say well done to Queensland Farmers' Federation for its Celebrating Agriculture event on the Thursday night. It was such strong support for the Palaszczuk government. I also thank federal minister Murray Watt and the Governor and Professor Nimmo for their attendance. That support is a tribute to the work of the QFF board; its CEO, Jo Sheppard; and all their member associations.

The Ekka is important to maintaining the social connection with an increasing urbanised Australia who needs the food and fibre produced. That is why the announcement we made about boosting our biosecurity defences was so important. This is more than \$22 million to build on the significant preparedness and readiness efforts we have already made. Those who claim that we are unprepared for the disease threats we face are actually paying a significant disservice and disrespect to the industries we are working so hard to protect. Who really thinks that the Queensland livestock industries, worth more than \$10 billion a year, are just sitting around waiting for governments to press a button before preparing for potential biosecurity threats? Of course they do not work like that. This is why the Palaszczuk government has been working on these right alongside them, not just in recent months but over many years.

When it comes to new disease and pest threats, Queensland is prepared. We are doing more to increase our preparedness, including extra biosecurity officers to be stationed in regional areas right across Queensland. Under the previous federal government, biosecurity staff were reduced by 25 per cent at a time of increasing biosecurity risk. Similarly, in Queensland when the LNP was in government, 26 per cent of biosecurity staff were cut. We need to work together to ensure that Queensland remains the state of good jobs, better services and a great agricultural lifestyle.