




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Agriculture Industry

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (8.22 pm): Queensland's agriculture sector is the shining jewel in the state's economy and something every Queenslanders should be proud of. I travel the state talking to farmers every chance I get. I was on the Sunshine Coast at Eudlo Native Trees with the member for Nicklin just last week, announcing a Palaszczuk government's Rural Economic Development Grant that will create even more good jobs as that business expands. With the member for Kurwongbah I visited zoomgarden at Burpengary, a major grower of herbs and ornamental plants for Queensland retailers, where another Rural Economic Development Grant will support an additional 18 good jobs after construction of a new greenhouse. I had the pleasure of visiting Reck Farms near Gatton where they will use RED grants for new processing equipment that will turn a four-month exercise of operations into one that will support jobs all year round.

Members might wonder how the Palaszczuk government conceived such a good idea to support our farmers. I am happy to tell them. It is by listening to farmers, coming back to cabinet and delivering these good jobs for our farmers, for the sector right across our state. I know it is a revolutionary concept for those opposite, but that is what I do and that is what the Palaszczuk government does: we listen to farmers, we listen to the rural communities and we come back and deliver for them.

This government's record on supporting agriculture stands by itself. We have passed landmark and generational reforms to drought support programs; not to cut back on funding to farmers, not to push burdens elsewhere, but by working together with farmers and representative bodies like AgForce and the Queensland Farmers' Federation. We changed these programs to be more focused on preparedness, on helping farmers to get ready before a drought has severe impacts, and we made the assistance available to farmers who were not in officially drought-declared areas. We extended drought support to horticulture farmers because farmers told us about the critical difference that funding could make to their farm operations.

We supported our essential agricultural industries through the COVID-19 pandemic. How did we do it? By forming the Agricultural Coordination Group with over 100 participants, giving key stakeholders a direct voice to government when they needed it the most.

Something that sticks in my mind from last year's Beef 2021 event in Rockhampton that was so very strongly supported by the Palaszczuk Labor government, with so many of my fellow ministers and backbenchers in attendance, and that was something that the federal Nationals leader David Littleproud said at the Rural Press Club event. He said—

The best thing that governments can do for our farmers is to get out of their way.

I understand that the LNP has a particular view of the world, but so much of that view is out of step with Queensland farmers and Queenslanders everywhere, especially when they import US-style anti-government rhetoric that demonises the very existence of government.

When Queensland farmers face biosecurity threats, Labor governments step up, like our \$22 million foot-and-mouth disease and lumpy skin disease measures announced by the Premier at the Ekka this year. But the LNP steps out of sight. We saw today a Labor federal government delivering \$134 million for biosecurity for our nation. When floods and cyclones devastate our regions, we step up; we do not step back like the LNP. When markets were cut off by global trade issues, we stepped up with market diversification assistance; we did not step off the stage like the LNP. We listen to what farmers need and we commit to supporting them time and time again.

Our record on agriculture investment stands up. The last LNP agriculture budget was \$408 million. The most recent Palaszczuk Labor government's agriculture budget was \$608 million, an increase of nearly 50 per cent on the LNP's pathetic record of what they do in their claims of supporting farmers. That record is built on listening to our farmers. The Leader of the Opposition's record is stark as well. He sat around that cabinet table when the LNP was last in government, cutting 600 jobs out of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. That is the legacy of those opposite. He never apologised. He never acknowledged that he was wrong. You do have to wonder what he is hearing from farmers now.

How many times has the LNP put forward a private member's bill on agriculture in this House? I will tell you—zero. How many new ideas have they put forward to support our farmers? None whatsoever. How much has the LNP under this Leader of the Opposition taking farmers and their communities for granted? More than you can possibly imagine.