



Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner


MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL (NO. 3)

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BETTING TAX AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (7.57 pm): I rise to speak on the appropriation bills and the Betting Tax and Other Legislation Amendment Bill before the House. We all know—certainly on this side of the chamber—that appropriations can be a complex process. After what Queensland has been through over the last several years, what we have planned for the future is a real tribute to our Treasurer but also our Premier. Managing the state's finances is a considerable challenge, particularly in these current times.

One only needs to look at the most recent state budget to know that it is only the Palaszczuk Labor government that has a plan for the future of Queensland. Ours is a plan to bring good jobs right throughout our diverse and decentralised state, to provide better services and to protect the great lifestyle that Queenslanders hold so dear. A good government, such as the Palaszczuk government, budgets well, plans for the future, ensures that spending is invested as necessary and shows restraint where appropriate.

Supporting Queensland's agriculture industry is not just about sitting back and waiting for things to grow. Those on this side of the House, and possibly some on the other side, understand the challenges that are before us in agriculture, whether it be drought, floods or COVID. Our farmers have been through tough times. The Palaszczuk government supports our farmers by investing in complex biosecurity defence systems, such as the \$202 million in the current budget, and being ready to deal with any threat that approaches our shores.

It is also about acknowledging the current incursions and threats in our state. It is about managing more than \$140 million in agricultural research and extension so that our already-successful farmers can grow even more and export even more, and can do that more profitably so they get a justified return for all the hard work that they do. It is about grasping opportunities for Queensland, such as on Wednesday of last week when I joined the Treasurer at the Taste of Queensland Showcase before a follow-up event with the top beef buyers from around the world who are making multimillion dollar investment decisions in buying Queensland beef, the best beef in the world.

No government can predict every spending measure that might be required through a financial year before that financial year has even begun. For example, take the increased threat of foot-and-mouth disease and lumpy skin disease that our state faced this year. When both of those diseases were detected in Indonesia, the Queensland and federal governments stepped up to address the threat. Recently I was very pleased to hear the federal agriculture minister, Senator Murray Watt,

announce an increase in the number of sniffer dogs. Twenty additional dogs will be trained here in Queensland. The last Morrison-Morrison-Morrison government slashed the number of detection dogs from, I think, 20 to about eight. That demonstrates the differences between an LNP federal government and Labor federal and state governments when it comes to biosecurity threats. That is notwithstanding the announcement made by the Premier at the Ekka this year of an additional \$22 million over the next five years to protect our shores, our state and our valuable cattle industry from the threats of FMD and LSD. At least 10 additional biosecurity officers will work across our state to prepare for the threat of those diseases. Time and time again this evening, LNP members opposite have described that as waste. I will tell you where the waste sits: it sits in the seats across the chamber.

We know that the opposition have taken issue with the unforeseen expenditure referred to in this bill but, just like the service delivery statements used during the budget and at estimates, the opposition does not know how it works. I want to help the opposition out so I will explain it to them. Unforeseen expenditure is expenditure from the consolidated funds above the amount approved by previous appropriation acts. That is a normal part of the budget processes and the budget cycle. It happens every single year in every single government. The opposition struggles with that. It is just like how they try to paint the usual treatment of emergency drought assistance as a cut because it was not forecast through four years of the forward estimates.

Of course, the trouble for them is that this is how it has always been done including when the LNP was in government. They must have forgotten since they were last in power. The member for Maroochydore was in the parliament with Campbell Newman, as were the member for Nanango, the member for Mudgeeraba and—yes, you guessed it—the member for Broadwater. One might think that, between them, they would remember how budgets work but, having listened to their contributions to the debate this evening, it seems that that is not the case.

When you have an emerging issue you do not wait for the next budget; you deal with the problem when it arises. New policies can be implemented, emerging issues can be dealt with and people can be supported through natural disasters. What will the LNP approach be if they ever again form government in Queensland? If there is flooding in December, will they ask our farmers to wait until the June budget before they provide assistance? Do they class that as waste? I ask members to imagine a serious biosecurity risk on our shores such as currently exists. Will those opposite say, 'Let's wait until next year's budget to see if the disease enters our shores before we consider the appropriation of funds to deal with the incursion.'

Mr Hinchliffe: They'd be sacking the dogs.

Mr FURNER: I take the interjection; they would sack the dogs. When COVID took hold and spread across the nation, would the LNP have advocated waiting for the budget to extend lifesaving medical and other interventions?

In 2019 the monsoonal event that impacted northern and western Queensland caused up to half a million livestock losses and had devastating impacts on both private and public infrastructure. The Palaszczuk government has made extraordinary investments to restore roads and critical rail services and has backed our farmers to help them recover and rebuild. That is not waste. That is supporting primary industries. That is supporting farmers. That is supporting the whole state and the good jobs that come from those areas in times of need. That is what good governments do. That is what good Labor governments, such as the Palaszczuk Labor government, do.

What would the opposition have done? That monsoonal trough event happened in late January. Imagine an LNP government saying to those farmers and those communities, 'Sorry, we can't help you right now, but we'll see you in June.' It is a bit late when the roads and the railway lines are cut such as I saw. The member for Gympie was with me at that time. We saw it firsthand. I wait to hear the member's contribution to see if he would support the farmers in our great state of Queensland following monsoonal events or other natural events that affect our state. Will he be prepared to stand up and support these appropriation bills or will he remain silent as he does on many occasions? Considering the multiple natural disasters and the ongoing impacts of drought, additional expenditure beyond what has already been appropriated is entirely proper.

It is always instructive to look at the statement of reservation in a committee report because it creates a window into what life under an alternative government might be like in Queensland. In this instance, the opposition's statement of reservation in the report of the Economics and Governance Committee is particularly insightful. The statement of reservation, signed off by the member for Mermaid Beach, the member for Coomera and the member for Ninderry, decries the expenditure in this bill as 'wasteful spending'. Once again, we know where the waste sits in this House. The waste is sitting on the benches opposite. Wasteful spending indeed!

Was the additional federal funding for the Horticultural Netting Program and the Future Drought Fund wasteful spending? Those things protect good jobs and are funded under this bill. Was the extra funding for programs under the drought assistance and reforms packages wasteful spending? Those funds ensure better services for farmers going through drought or preparing for the next drought. What about the additional funds to address the incursions of the red imported fire ant? I listened to the member for Scenic Rim somehow complaining about that, notwithstanding the fact that this government has invested \$37 million to combat that pest. If we were not combatting the pest it would have spread as far north as Mackay, as far west as Longreach and as far south as Canberra.

It is only a Labor Palaszczuk government that is addressing the concerns of our farmers in this state and protecting them from incursions such as those that currently exist on our borders. I commend the bill to the House.