




Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Furner**

**MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 June 2023

**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) (12.30 pm): I rise to speak on the Palaszczuk government's outstanding 2023-24 budget with cost-of-living support for Queensland families, an enormous \$20 billion capital infrastructure investment and a surplus that the federal government would be proud of. The budget handed down by the Treasurer this week is an outstanding Labor budget, with the welfare of Queensland at its heart. This is further brought to life through our continued strong investment in hospitals and health, in policing and justice, in housing and in our Energy and Jobs Plan, which are all funded in part by progressive coal royalties that ensure Queenslanders reap the deserved benefit from a fair share of the profits created by the minerals beneath their feet.

This is a budget that, at its core, shows what the Palaszczuk government is all about. Ours is a government with a strong plan for Queensland—not just words and slogans but real policy and real action. Our plan is not to cut more than 600 jobs at the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, as the LNP did when in power as part of their agenda of cutting, sacking and selling.

As Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries, I could not be prouder of what this budget will deliver for our primary producers. As the Treasurer said in his speech on Tuesday—

Regional Queensland delivers our economic success ... through the food and fibre that is recognised around the world for its sustainable quality. Queensland's reputation for high-quality agriculture is a competitive advantage that must be maintained.

Our produce is the best in the world and, as minister, I want to make sure our primary producers are supported to expand on their remarkable record of putting outstanding food on the table for Queenslanders and indeed, the rest of the world.

Before I delve into the detail of this budget, I would like to thank our industry representatives who joined me online on Tuesday to discuss what this budget means for them. They included the QFF, AgForce, the Australian Sugar Milling Council, the Nursery and Garden Industry Association of Queensland, GrowCom, the Queensland Beekeepers' Association, David Foote from Cattle Australia and Australian Country Choice along with other stakeholders from across our state. Their feedback has been invaluable and we are proud to work with them for the benefit of our state's agricultural sector.

The budget includes a \$550 million investment into agriculture and fisheries, with a targeted focus on our state's biosecurity and drought resilience. The LNP has not been vocal on whether they would keep progressive coal royalties, which are delivering \$7 billion to the budget. How can they support agriculture in Queensland if there is going to be a \$7 billion hole in the budget? That just means the LNP will cancel the Big Build and cut frontline staff across Queensland, just like Campbell Newman did when he cut my department. They have already announced that they want to cut \$10 billion from infrastructure and the member for Chatsworth has admitted to a secret plan for \$2 billion in cuts.

Queensland faces more biosecurity threats than any other state. The threats of pest and disease are always knocking on our door, from air and from sea. Those are threats that could decimate our world-class agriculture if given the chance. The Palaszczuk government is determined not to give them the chance. We recognise these threats and remain ironclad on our commitment to fortify our defences against pests and disease. That is reflected in a bumper biosecurity budget.

We are investing \$61 million over the next four years to do our bit to combat fire ants. That money will go towards the National Fire Ant Eradication Program, which is co-funded by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments. That is in addition to funding for the program that was brought forward in our previous budget. The program is the most successful fire ant program in the world. Nations such as the United States, China and Japan have struggled to contain the spread of that pest but it has been contained to just South-East Queensland, thanks to the program. Since the first detection in Brisbane in 2001, if left unchecked, by now fire ants would have spread as far north as Bowen, as far west as Longreach and as far south as Canberra. Put simply, when it comes to fire ants we are doing our part.

We are also doing our part when it comes to the national fight against other pests and diseases. A sum of \$35 million over five years, and \$7 million each year after that, has been committed to the National Biosecurity Strategy. It is a cohesive plan that will ensure that all states and territories are working together with the Commonwealth to protect us all from biosecurity threats. It does not matter if a pest or disease crosses the border in Victoria, New South Wales or the Northern Territory; it can still pose a serious problem for Queensland. That is why it is so important that we are working together and never have we worked together better than with the federal Labor government at the helm.

The biosecurity investment in this budget does not end there. We will invest \$22 million over five years and \$2.5 million every year after that to address increasing animal biosecurity risks. This includes combating foot-and-mouth disease, lumpy skin disease and other diseases that can severely impact Queensland livestock. We will also invest \$21.7 million over the next 5 years and \$2.8 million each year after that to prepare for plant pest and diseases.

In terms of drought, for the first time in a decade, less than ten per cent of Queensland is drought declared. Only the Diamantina and Bulloo shires remain officially in drought. While the lush green pastures and good conditions are here now, we know they will not always stick around.

Standing here once again as the farmers' friend, I am proud to have delivered another agriculture budget that will protect Queensland's food and fibre from biosecurity threats, provide assistance for farmers to be as drought prepared as they can be, and invest in creating more jobs and prosperity for rural and regional Queensland. The cost-of-living relief and major capital works benefits delivered in this budget will make a real difference to all Queenslanders. It is a plan that can be delivered by a strong and stable Palaszczuk Labor government, which will continue putting Queenslanders first.

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

*The speech read as follows—*

Queensland has withstood searing droughts before, and with drier conditions on the way, we know there is every chance we will experience them again in the future.

The Palaszczuk Government remains the best friend to farmers, and we are steadfastly committed to helping our primary producers and agribusinesses to be drought resilient.

We will invest \$100 million in loans over 2 years, and \$48.5 million over the next 3 years for programs and grants in the name of drought preparedness—expanding on previous funding commitments.

This funding will help farmers to install vital infrastructure like water tanks and feed storage.

Infrastructure that will help Queensland farmers to stay resilient when the river runs dry.

Low Emissions Agriculture Roadmap

This year I released the Low Emissions Agriculture Roadmap, with the support of the Queensland Farmers' Federation and AgForce.

A guiding document to assist primary producers and agribusiness owners continue the great work they are doing in reducing carbon emissions right across the supply chain—from paddock, to plate.

I'm proud to say this budget supports continued implementation of the Roadmap.

Sustainable fisheries

Since our election in 2015 the Palaszczuk Government has recognised the importance of protecting Queensland's abundant and healthy fisheries.

To ensure that our children, and their children, and their children will be able to enjoy fresh Queensland seafood, or throw a line in to catch barra or whiting.

All part of our great Queensland lifestyle, and all extremely important to protect.

That's why we're proud to be continuing our investment in our Sustainable Fisheries Strategy in this budget, to the tune of \$11.7 million over 3 years.

We will also be investing \$22 million over 4 years for the implementation of Independent Data Validation, monitoring commercial fishing activities in order to provide more accurate data on protected species interactions.

#### Forestry

The Native Timber Action Plan is supporting a competitive and sustainable timber industry in Queensland while also making sure we're doing our bit for conservation.

In this budget, we'll commit \$2.1 million to continue delivering the Plan, and I'm looking forward to continuing to meet regularly with timber leaders in Queensland to forge a successful path for the industry.

It was only on Wednesday I met with Parkside Timber to discuss the Palaszczuk Government's support for the industry, and how that will support them in their future endeavours.

#### RED Grants

Our Rural Economic Development Grants—better known as RED Grants—have provided \$12 million for agribusinesses and primary producers so far, supporting the creation of more than 2,500 jobs in Queensland's rural communities.

The Palaszczuk Government backs the bush, and we're backing RED Grants for the bush with further funding once again.

Another \$3.3 million has been allocated for further editions of this successful program.

#### Rural communities

Cost of living issues that are being faced right across Australia are at the top of the list of concerns for many Queenslanders.

This is certainly the case for many primary producers, and indeed, right across rural and regional Queensland.

It's important to note that the significant investment our government has made into measures like Cost of Living Rebates through power bills, free kindy, learn-to-swim vouchers, and accommodation and fuel subsidies for rural and regional Queenslanders who are travelling for essential healthcare—all of these measures will help our rural communities.

The Palaszczuk Government is ensuring the wealth derived for our state from the soil of rural and regional Queensland is flowing back to the bush.

This budget's strong investment in regional Queensland is clear to see in the \$20 billion capital works program.

65 per cent of that money has been committed to projects outside of greater Brisbane.

The scientists in my department undertake some of the finest agriculture research in the world.

Blazing a trail for bigger, tastier and more resilient crops.

Testing and trialling new agricultural technologies that will help our farmers achieve better yields.

The Palaszczuk Government will continue to support the excellent work of DAF scientists, with \$4 million towards upgrading research and operational facilities.

In much the same vein, we're also committing \$1.5 million to upgrade infrastructure and equipment at the Gatton Smart Farm.

We continue our focus on animal welfare with \$600,000 for the Young Animal Protection Society in Cairns to upgrade adoption facilities.

I am also looking forward to soon releasing the animal management taskforce discussion paper regarding proposed dog attack law reform, and announcing a consultation period. Watch this space.

Our government is also recognising the great work the Country Women's Association does in rural communities throughout Queensland, committing \$500,000 in grants to the Association for infrastructure upgrades.

#### Ferny Grove

There is a great deal to be excited about in this budget for my local electorate of Ferny Grove.

Our cost of living measures will make a big difference.

In fact it was just last Saturday I was at the Open Day of the Mitchelton Pre-School Centre. One of the centre executives was extremely complimentary of the Palaszczuk Government's free kindy initiative.

It's feedback like this that shows that our plan is helping members of the community.

In addition to cost of living measures like free kindy and energy bill rebates, there are a number of cash injections into local programs and projects that will directly benefit my community.

I'm proud to see this budget continues delivering important investments in upgrading local schools.

In April I was on hand to help turn the sod at Oakleigh State School in Ashgrove for the construction of a brand new hall, as part of our Great Schools Great Future program.

This budget continues delivering funding for that project, with \$5 million out of a total of more than \$8 million to be invested this financial year.

I'm really look forward to getting back to Oakleigh and seeing the finished product when it is completed—it will be a fantastic addition to the school.

Mitchelton State School students can look forward to a refreshed F Block building, with \$700,000 allocated in the budget to refurbish it.

This budget also continues delivering funding for the \$15 million construction of new facilities at Mitchelton Special School, \$1.2 million to upgrade amenities at Ferny Hills State School.

Almost \$850,000 will go towards important general maintenance and upkeep of our local schools as well.

And the investment is flowing for more than just our local schools.

A \$200,000 commitment has been made for the development of the Hills District Community Hub.

The Palaszczuk Government always backs local TAFEs, and that continues with a \$280,000 investment into the Grovely TAFE that will go towards training infrastructure and maintenance.

As Minister in charge of agriculture I am particularly pleased with this investment in Grovely, as it is a TAFE campus that is renowned for the delivery of horticulture and animal studies courses.

King's Birthday Honours

And before I conclude, there is one more acknowledgement I would like to make.

I would like to congratulate Bernadette Ditchfield, my Deputy Director-General of Agriculture, and Malcolm Letts, my former Chief Biosecurity Officer, who have been awarded Public Service Medals in the recent King's Birthday Honours.

Their work—especially during our COVID response—was integral to the ongoing success of the agricultural industry in this state during uncertain times, that helped see our sector continue to thrive.