



Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2023


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) (3.03 pm): I rise to speak on the State Development and Regional Industries Committee's estimates report. Once again, I thank the committee members for their scrutiny and their proposed spending measures in my portfolio. I also thank the chair, Chris Whiting, for his sincere focus on making sure the committee ran very well.

As the Leader of the House said, the committee hearing gave non-government members ample opportunity to put the budget under the microscope. Whether they did that effectively or not is ultimately a matter for others.

Opposition members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Order, members!

Mr FURNER: It is worth noting that on the State Development and Regional Industries Committee non-government questioning took up 311 minutes versus 148 minutes of government questioning. Therefore, there was a more than reasonable balance of questioning overseen by the chair.

As always, I and my departmental officers sought to provide information and respectful responses. What this government will never do is make a mockery of estimates like the Newman-Crisafulli government did when it was briefly in office. The opposition leader claimed in this chamber and also in the media that they were going to be transparent and seek reform to the estimates process. The opposition leader turned up twice to the estimates hearings. That is how confident and focused he was on reforming the estimates.

I also want to put on record my clear support for the passing of the Appropriation Bill. This budget has a determination and an absolute focus on supporting our world-class agricultural and fisheries sectors, and our rural communities, so they can continue prospering well into the future. We know from the latest AgTrends data that Queensland's agriculture and fisheries sectors are immensely lucrative, recently hitting a record high combined annual value of \$23.44 billion—no doubt in part this outcome was supported by the Palaszczuk government. This is an outstanding performance from our agricultural and fisheries producers and another advertisement for the exceptional produce they bring to our table and to export markets abroad.

Our primary producers generate jobs and wealth across the state, and this budget is focused on supporting those efforts. There is no better example of this than the extra funding the budget delivers to assist primary producers prepare for drought under the Drought Assistance and Reform Package. This means up to \$48.5 million over three years to be invested in programs and grants, and \$100 million over two years allocated for loans. In addition to this, we continue to deliver a highly successful Rural Economic Development Grants program—\$3.3 million is earmarked for these popular grants in this year's budget. In total, \$13.3 million in funding over five years has been provided through this program for 59 successful regional agribusiness projects, worth more than \$52.4 million, creating an estimated 2,500 new direct and indirect jobs.

More than \$21.7 million will be invested in biosecurity over five years, and \$2.8 million each year thereafter, for action against current and emerging plant pests and diseases.

Mr Head interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Callide will cease his interjections.

Mr FURNER: I will not refer to the pest over there from Callide. I am very proud that this budget will create 15 new permanent jobs within Biosecurity Queensland in a much needed boost to our fight against new and emerging pests, and the risk they pose to our primary producers.

Mr Head interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Callide, I have cautioned you a number of times now in the chair. You are warned under the standing orders.

Mr FURNER: Front and centre of our biosecurity priorities is the fight against red imported fire ants, which is why we have brought forward \$60 million in funding for the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program in this budget. Sadly, the opposition members of the committee find it impossible to understand the very simple fact that this is a national eradication program between the Commonwealth, states and territories. Either the LNP do not understand this or they are deliberately seeking to sow confusion about an effective program which has successfully limited the spread of fire ants. Had it not been for the national program, fire ants would now infest approximately 100 million hectares in an arc of country from Bowen in the north, to Longreach in the west and Canberra in the south at an annual cost to the economy of \$2 billion.

The budget also delivers \$11.7 million over three years to continue the implementation of our Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027, along with increased funding of \$9.2 million over five years and \$3 million per annum for Queensland's Shark Control Program.

Finally, I once again thank the parliamentary staff and my own ministerial staff for their hard work throughout the estimates process. I look forward on a yearly basis to the estimates process. It is a time when the opposition try to scrutinise this government for its successes throughout the year with regard to the funding it puts forward for my portfolio and for every portfolio, yet they fail on every account with their incompetence and their ineptitude at questioning at estimates. They could not ask one suitable question.

(Time expired)