




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Bush Summit; Ekka

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (10.10 am): There is no better friend of the bush than the Palaszczuk government. Let me repeat that: there is no better friend of the bush than the Palaszczuk government. On Friday last week I had the privilege of attending the Queensland Bush Summit with the Premier, the health minister, the members for Keppel and Rockhampton, and representatives of our bush and agriculture communities.

The summit acknowledged the enormous contribution of the bush to the Queensland economy. In recognition of this, we were pleased to announce key new support measures for our bush communities. I was particularly pleased to see the creation of a new \$50 million Backing Business in the Bush Fund. The fund will help businesses expand and relocate to the regions, driving more economic development and jobs in regional Queensland. Also at the Bush Summit we announced the establishment of a new \$30 million Backing Bush Communities Fund. This fund will leverage investment in projects which benefit regional communities, enabling councils and community organisations based outside the south-east to apply for grants of up to \$50,000.

It is fitting that the Bush Summit coincided with the 144th Ekka, which showcased the very best of the Queensland bush. Ekka 2023 drew more than 400,000 showgoers and its 21,000 competition entries once again hit pre-pandemic levels. There were over 150,000 strawberry sundaes sold, and I was personally responsible for some of those purchases for both me and the ABC hosts broadcasting from the showgrounds as I had the privilege of being on their shows. The sundae sales help fund crucial medical research through The Common Good organisation, so it was great to see so many showgoers getting behind this great cause while enjoying some great Queensland produce.

At this year's Ekka, I was also pleased to launch the historic \$130 million Fresh and Secure Trade Alliance with the Commonwealth agriculture minister Murray Watt. This eight-year program will see key Aussie export stakeholders and officials joining forces to help protect and grow Australia's horticultural exports. I want to thank all the volunteers who contributed to the success of Ekka 2023 including the hardworking Department of Agriculture and Fisheries staff who operated the annual stall this year. When city meets country, it brings out the very best Queensland has to offer, and Ekka 2023 was no different.