



Speech By
Tony Perrett

MEMBER FOR GYMPIE

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

 **Mr PERRETT** (Gympie—LNP) (3.09 pm): I rise to speak on the State Development and Regional Industries Committee's estimates report. Estimates proved that Minister Furner is failing. The minister has no answers about biosecurity risks, fire ants, timber shortages, skills and labour shortages, asset sales from agricultural colleges, the risky closure of biosecurity facilities and how to control feral pigs, cats and wild dogs and few answers about agricultural training and education. Questions remain about data integrity in relation to fish stock assessments. The minister was ignorant about compensation packages or accountability for lost fishing businesses. The minister was not interested in issues concerning quarry management which are impacting rural road costs. Opportunities for questions were tightly controlled and we were prevented from asking detailed questions about shark control, vessel and marine equipment, failure to ensure cattle tick vaccine supplies, wild dog fencing, grants, AgTech, research and development, and the PALM scheme. Queenslanders deserve answers about brands review, animal management, DAF's work culture, numerous biosecurity threats, industry best practice and the impact of staffing levels on DAF's capacity to deliver, let alone the departmental budget.

The minister's failures not only impact the industries they relate to but also the cost-of-living crisis, the housing crisis and the health crisis. The complete lack of government assistance, poor policy and failure to understand today's decisions—or lack thereof—have consequences. The abandonment of practical education and training for agriculture, poorly addressed labour shortages and cuts to service delivery are driving up the price of fruit and vegetables, meat and seafood, and timber for renovations and new houses, and are contributing to the cost-of-living crisis. After adjusting for CPI, DAF's appropriation revenue has been cut compared to actual and budgeted spends in 2022-23. While public servants will increase by more than 4,600 next year, DAF's will increase by two.

The management of fire ants is a catastrophe. Government responses were again dismissive and evasive, demonstrating there is no plan to eradicate fire ants in Queensland. We were told that the solution to the closure of the highly visible facility at Coen is to 'broaden and better target the services and programs it delivers'. If foot-and-mouth disease goes undetected it could wipe out the beef industry and drive up the cost of living. Estimates showed Labor's lack of commitment to long-term forest and resource sustainability. With regard to population booms and housing shortages, timber supply shortages—caused by 24 years of policy failures by successive Labor governments—are a ticking time bomb. While the Premier says that the high cost of structural timber is impacting the housing crisis,

DAF's director-general said that Queensland has no plan to increase supplies of structural timber. The minister had no answer when asked whether the federal government could ensure imported timber was sourced from countries with sustainable forestry practices. The director-general agreed that a greater supply of local structural timber would reduce the cost of timber to the end user. When asked whether Queensland needs to grow its current forest footprint to reduce its reliance on imported timber he said, 'I do not know how to answer that question.' In 2019 the Premier promised a timber advisory panel and a comprehensive two-year study to identify sustainable future options for timber supply, including on private land. Queenslanders are waiting.

Fishers are being blindsided by decisions made with no consultation and transparency around data collection and stock assessment processes. The minister continually refuses to complete regulatory impact statements. The minister said no to compensation for financial losses caused by changes to Spanish mackerel fisheries. Commercial fishers learned about sweeping changes to gillnet fishing zones in news reports. The minister told estimates it was the decision of UNESCO and the IUCN. Fishers in the Great Sandy Marine Park will be out of business by Christmas. The government has appointed a former WWF international director as task force chair and decision-maker on any compensation package. International pressure seems to be more important than the livelihoods of commercial fishers.

Minister Furner's charter letter compels him to work with the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services and contribute to delivering health care in rural areas. In the middle of a health crisis the minister could not identify even one formal meeting with the current health minister around this issue or with the former health minister in the last two financial years. There has only been one formal meeting more than two years ago with the previous minister. Astonishingly, when asked whether rural health care has improved since becoming Minister for Rural Communities the minister answered yes.

Estimates reconfirmed the government is consumed by crisis and chaos. The minister is blundering in the management of DAF and rural communities and failing all Queenslanders.