




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Agriculture Industry

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (2.09 pm): During this sitting week we had Valentine's Day. I will not be too sentimental, but I was hoping for a question from the member for Gympie. It has been a long time since the Liberal National Party has shown any love for the agricultural sector in this place. That is why the LNP has no admirers in regional Queensland, secret or otherwise. That is why I am 'Furner the farmers' friend', and not just on Valentine's Day. This is because of what the Miles Labor government delivers for the agricultural sector. From bouquets to biosecurity, we support Queenslanders.

I would like the House to know that our RED grants—the colour of love—and the latest round of EOIs are now open. That is up to \$200,000 for agribusinesses across Queensland. Over five years, our RED Grants program has provided a total of \$13.3 million in funding. This funding has supported 59 successful regional agribusiness projects worth more than \$52.4 million. These projects are estimated to have created over 2,500 new direct and indirect jobs.

Earlier this week, I encouraged local Queenslanders to get their flowers for their Valentine's Day gifts because it is not only good for local jobs but also better for biosecurity. The last surprise any gift needs to be is a bouquet with biosecurity bugs attached. Those opposite do not understand biosecurity. It is on the record that, when they were in government, they cut 26 per cent of biosecurity staff in this department. Also federally, they were the nemesis of the Department of Agriculture as 25 per cent of biosecurity staff were cut. Truly, they are the thorns in the side of agriculture.

They cannot support the good news when we announced 150 public service jobs in the fire ant program—a program that the LNP cut when they were in government. That is right—45 frontline workers were let go and \$1.1 million was slashed from the program. We still have not seen those opposite place on record what they plan to do with the Queensland biosecurity responsibilities if they get in.

Let's compare. We have demonstrated our credentials over the last nine years. Every Queenslander knows what Labor stands for. Every Queenslander knows that we back the bush. Any person who works in the agriculture sector needs to place the LNP under really strict scrutiny over the next nine months. The secrets of the LNP need to be revealed this side of the election, for the last thing this state needs is another LNP biosecurity bungle.