




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 20 August 2024

QUEENSLAND FOOD FARMERS' COMMISSIONER BILL

Message from Governor

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (11.20 am): I present a message from Her Excellency the Governor.

Mr SPEAKER: The message from Her Excellency the Governor recommends the Queensland Food Farmers' Commissioner Bill. The contents of the message will be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the message for the information of members.

MESSAGE

QUEENSLAND FOOD FARMERS' COMMISSIONER BILL 2024

Constitution of Queensland 2001, section 68

I, DR JEANNETTE ROSITA YOUNG AC PSM, Governor, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a Bill intitled—


A Bill for an Act to establish the office of Queensland food farmers' commissioner and for related purposes

GOVERNOR

Date: 20 August 2024

Tabled paper: Message, dated 20 August 2024, from Her Excellency the Governor, recommending the Queensland Food Farmers' Commissioner Bill 2024 [1525](#).

Introduction

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (11.21 am): I present a bill for an act to establish the Office of Queensland Food Farmers' Commissioner and for related purposes. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights. I nominate the Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Queensland Food Farmers' Commissioner Bill 2024 [1526](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Food Farmers' Commissioner Bill 2024, explanatory notes [1527](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Food Farmers' Commissioner Bill 2024, statement of compatibility with human rights [1528](#).

This important bill reflects the government's commitment to redress the imbalance in market power between the major supermarkets and their fresh produce suppliers. This imbalance in market power has the potential to result in price gouging and other predatory actions by supermarkets at the expense of their fresh produce suppliers. This can result in diminished incentives for investment by fresh produce suppliers, lower levels of food supply than might otherwise be the case and higher prices passed on to consumers.

This issue was addressed by the parliament's Supermarket Pricing Select Committee in its report, tabled on 31 May 2024. That report recommended the appointment of a commissioner to address this issue. On 12 August 2024, the Miles government accepted all of the recommendations of the committee including legislation to establish the position of the Queensland Food Farmers' Commissioner. This legislation is necessary to create a statutory position with real independence. This is essential to overcome the mistrust many producers have of the existing arrangements governing their relationship with the major supermarkets. The bill establishes the Office of the Queensland Food Farmers' Commissioner to work with and support Queensland farmers and consumers in their dealings with supermarkets to improve transparency, redress power imbalances, and support sustainability and stability of the food supply chain in Queensland.

Drawing on the recommendations of the select committee, the bill provides the following functions for the commissioner:

- to provide a primary point of contact for matters affecting Queensland-based agricultural and horticultural farmers;
- to provide information and advice to help farmers understand and manage arrangements that govern relationships between supermarkets and their suppliers;
- to work collaboratively with state and Commonwealth entities and other persons responsible for regulating farmers;
- to monitor and advise the Queensland government on developments in national arrangements that govern the relationships between supermarkets and their suppliers;
- to report to the minister about a particular issue or general matter affecting farmers or consumers including, for example, improper behaviours and business practices adversely impacting farmers or consumers;
- to prepare reports about a particular issue or general matter relating to farmers or consumers, or the commissioner's functions; and
- to perform any other function given to the commissioner under this or another act.

The commissioner is appointed by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the minister for not more than three years, with the possibility of one further three-year appointment. The initial expression of interest that has been circulated is for an interim appointment of 12 months. This will allow for consideration of longer term arrangements once the Australian government landscape in this area becomes clearer by mid-2025.

The interim commissioner will be eligible for longer term appointment. Staff of the commissioner will be employed under the Public Service Act. The minister may give the commissioner a statement of expectations. Importantly, the bill contains confidentiality provisions which will protect the confidentiality of information provided to the commissioner and the privacy of the individuals concerned. The bill requires a review of the act after four years. In practice, the government intends to consider longer term arrangements, including the need for further legislation, on advice from the commissioner in mid-2025.

I would like to thank the members of the Supermarket Pricing Select Committee for their report, and the officers of my department and others who have developed and expedited this legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. ML FURNER (Ferry Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (11.25 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee.