

Speech By

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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Fuel Security

Mr CHIESA (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (2.42 pm): Today I rise to speak about the four Fs—fuel, food, family and our future. In Hinchinbrook and in regional Queensland, fuel is not just a number on the side of a bowser; fuel powers our harvesters, pumps, trucks, fishing boats, freight, family cars and regional economies. When the price of fuel rises sharply, the impact is immediate and felt first and hardest in the regions. Right now Queenslanders are dealing with both a price shock and a supply shock.

The ACCC has confirmed that the concerns about diesel availability in regional and rural Australia are real; that is fact. Diesel is not optional in regional Queensland. When diesel supply stops, food supply to the shelves stops. I have spoken to people on the ground living this reality. In the Herbert River region one farmer ordered 3,000 litres of fuel more than a week ago. He still has not received it. Normally that delivery arrives within days. It is not just an inconvenience; it is a warning sign. When fuel does not arrive on time it affects planting, harvesting, freight, income and confidence.

Queensland was the first state to call out fuel security issues. The Treasurer wrote to the federal minister on 9 March calling for national leadership and a national plan as the state was on the precipice of fuel insecurity, an issue significantly impacting daily life, yet the National Cabinet response did not come until 19 March.

Let me bring honourable members back to what that means. The sugar industry uses approximately 1.3 litres of fuel to harvest one tonne of cane. When fuel rises by $1.25 a litre, it costs an extra $1.63 just in fuel to harvest that tonne of cane. The Herbert River mills, Victoria and Macknade, crushed a total of 3.8 million tonnes. If prices stay high that will equate to $6.2 million in additional fuel costs. In Tully, 2.2 million tonnes were crushed, potentially adding another $3.5 million to the fuel bill. That is millions of dollars stripped from regional economies—money that would otherwise support wages, machinery, contractors, small businesses and families.

It is not just cane. A grazier from the Kennedy valley transporting cattle in his cattle truck to Charters Towers is now facing an additional $255 in fuel costs per trip, or $21 per head. These costs do not disappear. Then there is the impact on our horticulture and commercial fishers. They are making decisions on whether to plant or to fish. That decision could reduce supply and push up food prices.

What needs to happen? The federal government needs to recognise the strain this is placing on primary producers, freight operators and regional industries more broadly. This is bigger than a temporary price spike; it is a national fuel security issue. It goes to national self-sufficiency, resilience and our ability to keep food and goods moving across the country. The Crisafulli government is doing its part by ensuring there is a flow of information to allow the federal government to deliver supply. We are actively providing assistance towards the national plan, ensuring issues raised directly from regions like Hinchinbrook are being understood by Canberra. Let me tell you: they need some help in understanding some of the issues we face in regional Queensland.

Long term, we are backing supply by opening up new gas and petroleum exploration to secure jobs, growth and energy security in areas such as the Taroom Trough, which has the potential to be the first new major oil province in the country since the 1970s. Contrast that with the Labor opposition. They are not serious about the issue. Why are they not raising the important issues that matter to regional Queensland, like the ones I have mentioned, with their federal Labor counterparts? They had a decade to undertake long-term planning and approvals to secure our energy future to be more self-sufficient, but they spent millions of taxpayers' dollars on hydrogen trucks.

We will continue to ensure Canberra understands the critical nature of this issue. We will continue because, unlike those opposite, when diesel prices surge and supplies falter we know that the consequences do not stay at the bowser. They hit the paddock, the mill, the truck and our fishers. We produce the food that feeds the state. They hit the supermarket and then they hit the kitchen table.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr CHIESA: I wish those opposite would listen. We need fuel to grow food to feed our families and to secure our future. That is what the four Fs are all about.