

Question on Notice

No. 869

Asked on 17 June 2021

MR R KATTER ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES AND MINISTER FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise how the proceeds of the \$32.5m sale of the iconic Emerald Agricultural College property 'Berrigurra' will be used to recruit and retain staff to fill significant worker shortages in the agricultural industry?

ANSWER:

The net sale proceeds of \$32.5 million from the sale of Berrigurra Station at auction in May 2021 have been returned to Queensland Treasury.

For the benefit of the Member, I can advise there are a number of programs to assist an increase of workers in agriculture.

In September 2020, the Queensland Government announced \$1.1 million for the agricultural seasonal labour initiative to get more seasonal workers on to farms. The initiative includes the #PickQld campaign, the Back to Work in Agriculture Incentive Scheme and additional funding to the Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network (QAWN) to develop local workforce solutions.

The Gateway to Industry Schools Program (GISP) also enables industry and schools to connect and develop pathways to employment and further training for this sector. GISP is targeted to specific schools and is co-ordinated with industry peak representative bodies such as the Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) and AgForce. Over \$350,000 is invested annually on GISP arrangements to assist industry.

The Queensland Government also invests in Vocational Education and Training (VET) that is based on industry advice to provide Queenslanders with the skills they need to gain meaningful and sustainable employment.

Government funding is directed to minimise skills shortages, focus on training for jobs that are in demand in our critical industries such as agriculture, and increase the number of Queenslanders with formal post-school qualifications.

In the 2020-21 year to date, \$19.042 million has been invested by the Queensland Government through the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training to assist 8,971 students in agriculture and horticulture.

The 2021-22 State Budget includes a range of initiatives across other enabling portfolios which will assist in delivering on the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' vision for Queensland being the world's leading provider of high-quality, safe, and sustainably produced food and fibre. These key investments include:

- Stage 2 of the Rural Centre of Excellence at Toowoomba TAFE – \$925,000 in 2021-22, out of a \$1 million total spend;
- Agriculture and Horticulture Centre at Bundaberg TAFE – \$1.6 million in 2021-22, out of a \$3.4 million total spend;
- Agricultural Centre of Excellence at Bowen TAFE – \$3.1 million in 2021-22, out of a \$3.4 million total spend;
- Aquaculture Training Centre Cannonvale TAFE – \$1.9 million in 2021-22, out of a \$2 million total spend.