



16 October 2020

Mr Stephen Lowe  
Chair  
Australian Banana Growers Council

By email: [Stephen.Lowe@abgc.org.au](mailto:Stephen.Lowe@abgc.org.au)

Dear Mr Lowe,

**Re: Banana Industry Policy Proposals**

Thank you for your letter of 25 September 2020 relating to the banana industry's policy platform for the 2020 Queensland State Election.

The Liberal National Party (LNP) is a strong supporter of rural and regional Queensland and agriculture sector as a key pillar of our economy. We value the role that banana growers play in our community and appreciate their advocacy through the Australian Banana Growers Council (ABGC).

The banana industry makes a significant contribution to Queensland economy and in particular, the North Queensland economy. The banana industry is responsible for creating and supporting thousands of jobs throughout the state.

The outcome of this election is far more important than simply determining who will lead Queensland through its first fixed four-year Parliamentary term. It is about Queensland's future and who is best placed to guide us through the biggest economic crisis in almost a century.

**LNP's economic plan**

The LNP has a bold vision to make Queensland the economic powerhouse of Australia once again; the best place to get a job and get ahead. An LNP government will implement our economic plan for a decade of secure jobs, to get Queenslanders working again and drag Queensland out of the recession by stimulating the economy.

Unlike the Palaszczuk Labor Government, the LNP has a plan to build a stronger economy. While it is true that economic uncertainty has never been so widespread in Queensland, it should not be forgotten that Queensland had the nation's highest unemployment, most bankruptcies and lowest business confidence prior to COVID-19. As such, the decision by Anastacia Palaszczuk to cancel this year's budget was reckless, and with Queensland the only Australian jurisdiction to not have a budget it means Labor is flying blind through the biggest economic crisis in almost a century.

Our vision is to make Queensland the economic powerhouse of Australia once again, the best place to get a job, get ahead and raise a family.

The LNP's plan will get Queensland working again.

Our plan for a stronger economy and secure jobs is based on four foundations:

- investing for growth
- unleashing Queensland industry
- supercharging the regions
- securing our children's future

The LNP is the only party that has a plan to create a stronger economy and more secure jobs.

### **Supporting Queensland's agricultural industry**

A centrepiece of the LNP's plan is to unlock the full potential of our regions and the agricultural sector, which remain one of our state's most important and valuable economic drivers.

The LNP fully supports Queensland farmers and we are determined to unlock the state's agricultural potential, to supercharge our regions and create jobs.

An LNP Government will build the drought-busting New Bradfield Scheme, back new dam projects across Queensland, and reduce the price of water for SunWater irrigators by almost 20%, ensuring it is affordable for farmers to use.

An LNP Government will secure Queensland's food and fibre first, backing local farmers and supporting local jobs.

We will do that by outlining industry specific initiatives that:

- back Queensland farmers
- create more regional jobs
- get agriculture working again

The LNP will set an ambitious goal of doubling the value of agricultural production by 2035, from \$18 billion to \$30 billion, and then doubling it again to \$60 billion by 2045.

Central to our plan to grow Queensland agriculture is a commitment to reduce the costs of critical input costs and bad regulations that impact the profitability, productivity, and jobs throughout the entire agricultural supply chain.

The LNP has also committed to reviewing the state's vegetation management framework to ensure the laws support the development of economically sustainable agricultural production.

The LNP has also committed to working with the agricultural sector and environmental groups to review and develop new environmental reef standards which will be enshrined in legislation.

The LNP understands prices are already too high and without affordable water Queensland businesses and farms won't be able to employ Queenslanders.

That is why the LNP has announced its plan to reduce nearly 20% off the price of water for Queensland's 5,000 Sunwater irrigation customers from 1 July 2021 – something that will directly assist some of your members.

The LNP's plan for Queensland also includes a no-new-tax guarantee and cheaper electricity prices for regional areas, delivered through the introduction of retail price competition.

#### **Panama TR4**

The impact of Panama TR4 on Queensland's banana industry should not be understated. The industry's impressive resilience in containing and managing the invasive disease should also not be understated.

Biosecurity incursions and outbreaks such as Panama TR4 pose a critical existential threat to Queensland's agricultural sector.

We will bolster Queensland's biosecurity front line and back farmers with 10 extra operational staff.

The LNP has been listening to farmers who are concerned that Labor has inadequately responded to pests, weeds, and invasive diseases. The LNP will end six years of Labor inaction and renew a focus on what matters to farmers.

The LNP share ABGC's grave concerns with the risk of illegal trespass activities on plant industries.

We will back Queensland farmers and landholders against extreme activists who illegally trespass and shut down businesses and cost local jobs. It makes Queensland a less attractive place to invest and puts regional jobs at risk.

The Palaszczuk Labor Government has ignored calls from industry and community representatives for tougher measures to deter serial protestors from breaking the law and trespassing on private properties and public freight routes. Labor's deliberately inadequate approach isn't working.

Our tough stance will provide a biosecurity safety net for farming families.

The LNP is the only party which will protect agricultural jobs by delivering tough consequences for criminal behaviour. Trespassing protestors will face serious jail time and heavy fines under the LNP's laws.

The LNP will introduce three new criminal offences to bolster Queensland's trespass laws, including:

- aggravated trespass: maximum penalty of 3 years imprisonment or a maximum fine of 100 penalty units (\$13,055)
- serious criminal trespass: maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment or a maximum fine of 3000 penalty units (\$391,650)
- organised trespass: maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment or 3000 penalty units (\$391,650)

We take the management of pests and weeds seriously, including managing feral pigs which create a biosecurity risk. An LNP Government will deliver a Budget within the first 100 days of election, and we will work with you on future funding opportunities.

We will also work closely with ABGC and the broader industry to further investigate additional solutions and resources to ensure Biosecurity Queensland is more responsive and efficient in managing issues such as Panama TR4.

### **Great Barrier Reef Water Quality**

The LNP has fought against Labor's unworkable reef laws since they were introduced last year. These laws hurt farming communities without improving environmental outcomes.

Labor's reef regulations do not strike a balance between preserving the environment and protecting local jobs. Instead, they hand power to unelected bureaucrats and tie up farmers in unworkable red and green tape.

Governments should work alongside farmers and farming communities instead of forcing unworkable laws on them.

The LNP has stood shoulder to shoulder with Queensland farmers against these laws.

An incoming LNP Government will work with the agricultural sector to develop new environmental reef standards which will be enshrined in legislation.

The principles of our approach will be:

- improving water quality standards to protect the Great Barrier Reef
- protecting and securing our valuable agricultural sector
- legislating minimum standards
- respecting property rights
- incentivising best practices

We will fix the unfair and draconian components of Labor's current reef laws. Changes to regulations will provide certainty, respect privacy, and be based on sound agronomic science.

We need a partnership to build a sustainable agricultural industry and protect Queensland's greatest natural asset, the Great Barrier Reef.

The LNP has a proud record of supporting and funding industry led best management practice (BMP), something a LNP Government would continue. We are committed to working with industry groups to grow and improve the existing programs to include even more farmers and land being managed sustainably and profitably.

The LNP firmly believe that the BMP and industry led programs are an important tool in engaging farmers to improve some of the environmental and economic challenges facing the industry and its relationship with the Great Barrier Reef.

## **Workforce Solutions**

The LNP understand the importance of ensuring farmers have access to suitable labour, especially during the peak picking season. The impact of COVID-19 as well as rigid state border restrictions have created workforce shortages, especially for seasonal horticulture industries like bananas.

Both the Federal and State Government have a role in assisting and enabling industry to find solutions. The Federal Coalition Government's recently announced budget measures to incentivise and encourage young Australians and those not employed to consider working on our farms are welcome.

The LNP firmly support these types of initiatives and the proposal has in-principle support from the LNP.

Given the uncertainty and secrecy that exists because the Palaszczuk Labor Government has not handed down a budget it is difficult to make specific funding commitments when Labor cancelled the budget. The reckless decision to cancel the Budget has denied Queenslanders access to transparent information about the state of Queensland's finances.

In stark contrast to the Palaszczuk Labor Government, the LNP has committed to handing down a budget within the first 100 days if elected on 31 October 2020. We encourage ABGC to engage with the LNP during this process to ensure this funding request can be considered.

The LNP thank the ABGC for articulating proposals which identify how the state can continue to grow, expand, and create more jobs in Queensland's thriving banana industry.

If you require any further clarification or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me or my office.

Yours sincerely



**Tony Perrett MP**  
**Shadow Minister for Agricultural Industry Development,**  
**Fisheries and Forestry**  
**Member for Gympie**

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