

Media Statement

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Local water projects mentioned as Ag White Paper well received by farmers

Federal Member for Capricornia Michelle Landry said initial feedback about the Federal Government's White Paper on Agricultural Competitiveness has been positive from farmers and key agricultural sectors.

The White Paper is the first real direction developed for the nation to help farmers be more competitive and achieve a better return at the farm gate.

Ms Landry said locally the paper highlighted strong potential for Commonwealth involvement in raising Rookwood and Eden Bann Weirs near Rockhampton.

"I have been lobbying hard for water projects and it is great to see the Government identify the Fitzroy Agricultural Corridor and other potential projects to drive a stronger farming sector for Central Queensland," Ms Landry said.

The Fitzroy Agricultural Corridor is a \$400 million plus project that involves the upgrade of Eden Bann Weir and the further construction of Rookwood Weir.

"Stronger farmers means more jobs and a stronger economy," Ms Landry said. "These projects would not just mean greater opportunities for our farmers, but also would bring multi-million-dollar construction projects to our region and create jobs."

But Ms Landry said she would like to see stronger commitment from Queensland's Agriculture Minister Bill Byrne towards the project.

"There needs to be joint co-operation between state, federal and private enterprise in moving this project forward. That includes Queensland putting money on the table for water projects, just as other state governments have done. That's why Tasmania has got so many water projects up ahead of Queensland," she said.

Two papers marry:

Ms Landry said when married with the White Paper on Northern Australia, she hoped that the White Paper on Australia's Agricultural Competitiveness would assist to progress other major concepts for the Rockhampton region such as making the city airport a hub for flying out international agricultural food exports.

"There is a tremendous amount within the paper that provides direct benefits to farmers in their daily business and the industry sectors that support them," Ms Landry said, "there is also a lot that encourages creative thinking and partnerships for export hub type concepts."

Farmers:

Some of the key highlights for farm businesses include:

- Banks will now allow farmers to use Farm Management Deposits (saved up for bad times such as drought) as a business loan offset, reducing interest costs estimated at up to \$150 million a year, from 1 July 2016;
- Farmers to opt back into income tax averaging after 10 years, from 1 July 2016;
- Farmers to double their Farm Management Deposits (FMDs) to \$800,000, from 1 July 2016;
- Immediate tax deduction for fencing;
- Immediate tax deduction of the cost of new water infrastructure;
- Accelerated three-year depreciation of capital expenditure on fodder assets.

ACCC:

Ms Landry said other key highlights to benefit the region included the appointment of an ACCC commissioner specifically for agriculture to ensure farmers get a fair share in negotiations with major supermarkets and meat processors in the food supply chain.

“This will involve an \$11.4 million boost. Coles and Woolworths are often accused of pushing down the amount farmers get for their product. A more farm-savvy and proactive ACCC will encourage fair-trading and strengthen competition in agricultural supply chains,” Ms Landry said.

Biosecurity boost:

Ms Landry said biosecurity would also be boosted under a \$200 million package. Previously, the MP has lobbied to stop the imports of Malaysian pineapples into Australia that could be harmful to Queensland’s pine industry.

The package includes:

- \$200 million to improve biosecurity surveillance and analysis nationally;
- \$30.8 million to break down technical barriers to trade and appointing five new overseas Agriculture Counsellors; and
- \$12.4 million to modernise Australia’s food export traceability systems to further enhance our food safety credentials.

More for black spots:

The Government is also investing an extra \$60 million on top of its existing \$100 million Mobile Black Spot Programme to improve mobile coverage in regional areas.

Ms Landry recently announced that four new base towers would be built in Capricornia (Clarke Creek, Marlborough, Mt Chalmers Road between Rockhampton and Yeppoon, and Gargett in the Pioneer Valley).

She said more local black spots need to be fixed up and the extra funds in the national pool would be helpful.

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