



Dale Last MP
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Media Release – Last sounds urgent alarms to save Qld crops

Shadow Minister for Rural and Regional Affairs Dale Last is calling for the government to get serious on quarantine facilities after it was revealed a scheme to entice Australian workers to pick crops in Queensland was a dismal failure.

Mr Last said with Pacific Island Seasonal Workers being unable to access hotel quarantine, the government needed to lift its game when it came to exploring alternative quarantine options outside of the South-East.

“In recent weeks we have seen how the Delta variant can thrust parts of our state into snap lockdowns and indications are that more lockdowns could occur in the future. You would think alarm bells would be ringing for quarantine facilities outside the South-East to be explored more rigorously,” Mr Last said.

“Places like Nebo Junction who already have the backing of a key medical provider need to be seriously considered. By that I mean we need boots on the ground assessing these facilities and working with them to secure approvals needed not just for the sake of our farmers but for every Australian family who enjoys Queensland produce.”

Mr Last said having previously been used as a mining camp and having a capacity to hold 85 people at a time, it seemed logical for the Nebo Junction facility to be considered for urgent assessment as quarantine facility.

“Quite frankly the efforts for quarantine facilities for farm workers by the state government has been nothing more than a joke and instead we have seen what has proven to be a lack-lustre effort to put a band aid on an issue we predicted would reach boiling point eight months ago,” Mr Last said.

“For a Minister who stands up in Parliament and touts he is a ‘friend of the farmer’ he has not only let every horticulture farmer down, he’s managed to ensure families right across the state bear the burden.”

“The rebranded program has so far received 665 applications, the reality is that is less than a tenth of what is needed in North Queensland alone.”

“I have heard from industry members that Pacific Island workers were stopped from using hotel quarantine in the state, that should have been all the wake-up call they needed to get assessors on the ground in regional Queensland to inspect alternative options to quarantine these workers.”

Mr Last said with the revelation that the state had lost \$42million in crops, the failure of the #pickqld scheme, as well as the predicted 15 to 20 per cent increase at the grocery check-outs, it was well past time for alternative measures to be considered.

“The Minister has known about the failure of the scheme, the need for more quarantine facilities for Pacific Islander workers and the fact that for a lot of our farmers waiting this long would be too late, so one would have to ask where the ‘friend of the farmer’ has been all this time.”

“Meanwhile our farmers are on their knees and our country’s ability to feed itself is quickly diminishing.”

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