

Office of Dale Last MP | Member for Burdekin

Shadow Minister for Police & Corrective Services, Shadow Minister for Fire & Emergency Services, Shadow Minister for Rural & Regional Affairs



December 9th, 2020

MEDIA RELEASE

Regional QLD gutted by cuts, abandoned by minister

A fired-up Shadow Minister for Rural and Regional Affairs, Dale Last, has labelled the Minister for Rural Communities a “*claytons Minister*” and warned regional Queenslanders to prepare for cuts like they have never seen before.

Mr Last said Minister for Rural Communities, Mark Furner, had “*no idea, no staff and no funding*” and is concerned that Labor’s almost \$400 Million in savings targets will unfairly affect regional areas.

“Yesterday’s (Tuesday) Estimates Hearing into rural communities was an absolute farce,” Mr Last said. “Minister Furner confirmed that his own Ministry has no staff and no funding and, when asked the difficult questions, he proved he has no idea.”

“Minister Furner referred to his Charter Letter and his role in working with other Ministers such as the Minister for Health. How many Ministers does it take to realise that, in large parts of regional Queensland, we face a health crisis because there are insufficient doctors, nurses and allied health workers?”

“Here we have the Minister that stood by, silently, while his government demonised primary producers with increased red and green tape and put rural communities at risk of vanishing completely. Now, that same Minister is going to work with other Ministers to deliver for rural Queensland; give me a break.”

“When I grilled Minister Furner on massive increases in unemployment and even the regional forums his department is supposed to organise, he had no answers because he has no idea.”

Mr Last said the government’s “*savings targets*” would undoubtedly have a disproportionate effect on regional areas, especially when it came to workforce changes.

“The Labor government’s very own ‘budget highlights’ identifies changes to the workforce and structural reform as areas to save money,” Mr Last said. “You can almost definitely translate that into job losses in regional areas and having oversight for large areas centred in Brisbane instead of in the regions.”

“It’s even more proof that Labor are hypocrites when they accuse anyone else of cuts or sackings.”

“When you cut over \$57 Million from Transport and Main Roads, that means workers losing their jobs and reduced maintenance. Does the government expect regional Queenslanders to believe roads in Brisbane will bear the cuts.”

“There is over \$2.9 Million in cuts to the Departments of Agriculture & Fisheries and Resources in this financial year. Those industries are the heart and soul of most of regional Queensland and this government is slicing them to threads.”

“The jargon and diversions this government is using just over a month after an election is deeply concerning, especially in rural and regional communities.”

“If Minister Furner wants help organising the regional forums he is responsible for, I’m more than happy to suggest a few locations and a few topics he can discuss. For example, he might like to explain what ‘*agency functional reviews*’ are, because, to those of us that live in the regions, that means service cuts.”

ENDS - Media Contact: David Cooper (07) 4767 0500 or 0427 834 844

Sources: <https://budget.qld.gov.au/highlights/#queenslands-economic-recovery>

Estimates hearing: https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/hansard/2020/2020_12_08_EstimatesSDC.pdf (pages 91 to 94)