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MEDIA RELEASE

Last calls out Minister's gamble with farming future

The Minister for Health has managed to shrug off the chance to help an industry that is currently on life support and with it the chance to ensure families are able to access this season's Queensland-grown fresh fruit and vegetables, according to Member for Burdekin Dale Last.

Mr Last said with time fast running out to ensure farms had enough workers to harvest this season's crop, the Minister for Health had a perfect opportunity to consider a Federal Government pilot project which would have allowed pre-vetted seasonal workers to complete their quarantine prior to coming to Australia.

"While it was fantastic to see South Australia take up the trial, I have had farmers contact me inquiring why Queensland did not take up the option of such a pilot project."

"I wrote to the Health Minister with hopes of ensuring Queensland was able to access the pilot project that would have allowed workers to be on the ground and in fields much sooner," Mr Last said.

"Instead of taking up this opportunity the Minister has passed the buck."

"Queenslanders know how vital our farmers are in ensuring there is fresh fruit and vegetables on the table of every Australian."

"But the Minister has shown she is willing to gamble away vital time and with it the chance for more Australians to enjoy Queensland's fresh fruit and vegetables."

Mr Last said the gamble with the supply of Queensland fruit and vegetables had already driven some farmers in the district out of the industry permanently.

"I have already had a number of farmers contact me to inform me that if workers are not able to be on the ground in time for harvesting, not only will their product be left to rot in the fields but they will also be forced out of the industry," Mr Last said.

“Unfortunately, due to the current uncertainty, some farmers in my electorate have already had to make that difficult decision.”

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