



WIDE BAY ROUNDUP

APRIL 2024

THE ALBANESE GOVERNMENT'S FRESH FOOD TAX ON FARMERS

The House of Representatives considered several of pieces of legislation during the Autumn Parliamentary sittings, and the Albanese Government's Fresh Food Tax has to be one of the worst propositions brought before the House in this session.

The three Bills relate to Agriculture (Biosecurity Protection) Levies and Charges, and unbelievably, will make Australian farmers, fishers, and graziers pay for the biosecurity risks posed by their international competitors.

This tax will drive the cost of Australian produce up, thereby making imports more attractive to consumers, so it's a tax on Australian competition, making Australian produce more expensive and less competitive than overseas imports.

Higher costs of doing business means higher costs to consumers. In the middle of this cost of living crisis, the Labor Government is introducing new taxes that will drive up the price of home grown food and produce, making it even harder for the many Australians who are already struggling to make ends meet.

I spoke in parliament against this Bill. History shows that Labor treats the agricultural sector as a cash cow every time they get into government.



The Liberal and Nationals Coalition recognises the absolute necessity of maintaining strong border biosecurity measures to protect our flora, fauna, and agricultural industries from introduced threats.

But the importance of having a strong biosecurity system is not the priority of these Albanese Government Bills – it's all about raising taxes.

"The greatest threat to agriculture in this country is the Australian Labor Party".

The Bills do not contain any framework on how Labor's Fresh Food Tax will be administered, or how the funds raised will be used. Essentially, they are an open ended proposition with the proceeds going into general revenue.

The levies squeezed from our farmers are not even guaranteed to end up funding biosecurity measures. We don't know where the money will go and what it will be used for.

The Coalition did not support these Bills. In his 2023 Budget Reply speech, the Leader of the Opposition Peter Dutton announced that instead of imposing Labor's Fresh Food Tax on our farmers, a Dutton Coalition Government would introduce an Importer Container Levy.

This is in line with recommendations from the independent Craik Biosecurity Review, which investigated ways to sustainably minimise risks to our unique biodiversity and our vital agricultural sector.

The cost of eliminating imported biosecurity threats should be paid for by importers.

Not by Australian farmers!

DIGITAL ID BILL

Despite the Coalition's opposition, the Albanese Government's digital identity legislation has passed the Senate. The relevant Bills will now come before the House of Representatives for further consideration and debate.

When in government, the Coalition recognised that giving Australians the option to hold a digital ID may save time when it comes to dealing with government agencies.

However, the Albanese Labor Government's proposed digital ID legislation fails to address many of the reasonable concerns held by Wide Bay residents and Australians more broadly when it comes to this technology.

The Coalition believes that when it comes to digital ID, it must be purely voluntary on an opt-in basis. The Albanese Government's proposed legislation is full of loopholes and weak spots that have the potential to allow a government to make it so that a digital ID is necessary to access essential services.

There is also a heightened risk of data breaches, hacking, and scams under the proposed legislation.

I crossed the floor of parliament to bring on a debate about the impacts of the COVID vaccine mandates, and I will continue to fight for the rights and freedoms of Australians when it comes to these digital ID laws.

The Coalition had proposed amendments to Labor's laws that would protect the rights and freedoms of Australians.

The Albanese Labor Government rejected these amendments, and therefore I will be voting against these rushed and dangerous Digital ID Bills.

Please be assured that my Coalition colleagues and I will fight for the freedom of Australians to live according to their own conscience. I will always use my vote in parliament to ensure that Australia remains a free country where the rights of the individual are respected and upheld.

VAPING REFORMS BILL

One of my recent Parliamentary speeches addressed the booming demand for illegal and black market cigarettes and vapes, and the organised crime syndicates that control this \$1 billion trade.



The Labor Government is doubling down on its prescription only model, trying to push through its Vaping Reform Bill, making it illegal to import, manufacture, or supply non-therapeutic vaping products.

Australia is the only country to adopt a GP prescription model for vaping products. But this is not working when only around 10 percent of vape users purchase vapes legally with a prescription.

I am concerned that ramming ahead with this flawed plan will further drive the sale of these products to the black market and do little to prevent children from accessing them.

Sophisticated crime gangs are benefitting from this illegal trade while governments miss out on excise and GST revenue to fund schools, hospitals, infrastructure and services.

We need a better policy approach to combat criminal vapes and tobacco, and the Coalition supports an inquiry to examine effective controls and regulations, such as are in place in the United Kingdom, the United States of America, New Zealand, Canada, and the European Union.

My Coalition colleagues and I will continue to advocate for Australians to have more control over their lives, and fight for responsible, common-sense policies that promote community safety, rather than fuelling criminal gang activity and the growth of the black market.

TIARO BYPASS

It is now clear that Queensland needs a change of State Government if we want to see real action on the four lane Tiaro bypass.



Federal Infrastructure and Transport Minister Catherine King threw the four lane Tiaro bypass into doubt by subjecting it to a 90 day review in May 2023. In November 2023, after some 200 days of being under a cloud, the funding for the project remained committed.

Now, five months after the Federal review was completed, and four months after the State Member for Maryborough Bruce Saunders was told by Minister Catherine King on 18 December 2023 that the Queensland Government could manage delivery of the project according to its priorities, we find that the Tiaro bypass is being subject to a State Government review.

In 2021, almost three years ago, the former Federal Liberal and Nationals Government made it clear to the Queensland Government that Federal funding was ready to go - but the State Labor Government has dragged its heels

every time we have tried to step forward with this project.

In answer to a Question on Notice from Tony Perrett, State Member for Gympie, The Queensland Minister for Transport and Main Roads advised that while the \$336 million commitment for the project remains, the State Government now needs to ensure that the project scope still matches the available funding.

If there is now any question whether the scope of the project matches the available funding, that squarely rests on the State and Federal Labor Governments for failing to give the four lane Tiaro bypass the priority it always deserved, and the community expects.

With 11,000 vehicle movements on the section of highway between Maryborough and Gympie, the four lane Tiaro bypass - and the whole section between Gympie and Maryborough - would have already been completed if it was in New South Wales or Victoria. But the State Labor Government has steadfastly refused to prioritise or fast track the project.

Tragically, since 2023 seven lives have been lost on this section of the Bruce Highway and there have been more than 20 serious crashes. It's abundantly clear we need real action on this section now to prevent crashes and save lives.

We need the four lane Tiaro bypass done, and State and Federal Governments must get cracking on plans for four laning the whole section between Curra and Maryborough.

Wide Bay deserves nothing less.

You can read more about the bypass on my website <https://llewobrien.com.au/the-fight-to-fast-track-the-tiaro-bypass/>.

BRIDGE SAFETY PROGRAM DUMPED

The Albanese Government's decision to scrap the former Coalition Government's popular Bridges Renewal Program will have a direct and devastating impact on the safety, economic growth, and prosperity of the Wide Bay electorate.

The Labor Government's decision to axe this vital program shows how little they know or care about rural and regional economies and road networks.

The Bridges Renewal Program was introduced by the former Coalition Government in 2013/14 to support the agricultural and heavy vehicle transport industries. The Program provided dedicated funding for upgrading or replacing rural and regional weight limited bridges to open up safe and efficient routes for business and heavy vehicle access.

Improving the older and unsafe bridges on our road networks is vital for keeping them safe for motorists and truck drivers and supporting industry by improving productivity.

The Albanese Government's first 18 months has seen road funding programs slashed and axed, while \$450 million was wasted on the Voice Referendum, and billions of dollars allocated to reckless "renewables" projects that will have severe economic, environmental, and social impacts on rural and regional communities.

While the Albanese Government will tell you that they are making improvements by cancelling the Bridges Renewal Program and bundling it into a new local road and infrastructure program, the reality is that we have lost the dedicated regional commitment to upgrading old and unsafe bridges, and Councils will have to fight for a slice of this funding.

Since 2014, the Bridges Renewal Program has funded a number of important and strategic bridge upgrades across local government areas in Wide Bay, including;

GYMPIE REGIONAL COUNCIL

- ✓ Tandur Road Bridge
- ✓ Doyle's Bridge at Kandanga
- ✓ Goomong Road Bridge, and
- ✓ Kandanga Creek Road Bridge.

FRASER COAST

- ✓ Boar Creek Bridge near Bauple
- ✓ St Mary's Bridge at Tiaro, and
- ✓ Gutchy Creek Bridge.

NOOSA

- ✓ Cooroy Belli Creek Road
- ✓ Doonella Lake Bridge at Tewantin
- ✓ Garth Prowd Bridge at Noosa Heads
- ✓ Lawnville Road Bridge at Black Mountain
- ✓ Wahpunga Lane Bridge at Kin Kin
- ✓ Mary River Road Bridge
- ✓ Old Noosa Road Bridge, Orealla Crescent Bridge, and
- ✓ Tablelands Road Bridge 'B' at Cooran.

SOUTH BURNETT

- ✓ Marshlands Bridge

Upgrading and replacing these bridges wouldn't have happened under a Labor Government, and now the other bridges in Wide Bay in need of repair or replacement won't receive the dedicated federal support that has proven to be the critical catalyst to get them done.

This is a blow to farmers, graziers, the transport industry, local government, and ultimately the consumer.

3G Closure Checker Tool

The 3G network will be switched off on 30 June 2024. Wide Bay residents who are concerned about whether they will need to update their devices can use Telstra's 3G SMS Checker Tool.

This service will let you know if you will need to take action and upgrade your device to be able to access the 4G and 5G networks. It's very easy to use – just send an SMS with the number 3 to 3498 or "3G XT" to receive almost instant advice on your device. Further information about the 3G closure is available at www.telstra.com/3Gclosure.

Million Moves Challenge

I and my fellow MP's Ted O'Brien, Andrew Wallace and Terry Young, are taking part in the Million Moves fitness challenge.

For 21 days from 1 May 2024, we'll be completing 75 moves a day for 21 days, and encouraging our constituents to be involved, be active every day and improve their health.

More than three quarters of Australians don't get the exercise needed for their physical and mental wellbeing. Inactivity is the second leading risk factor contributing to chronic disease – and it's preventable!





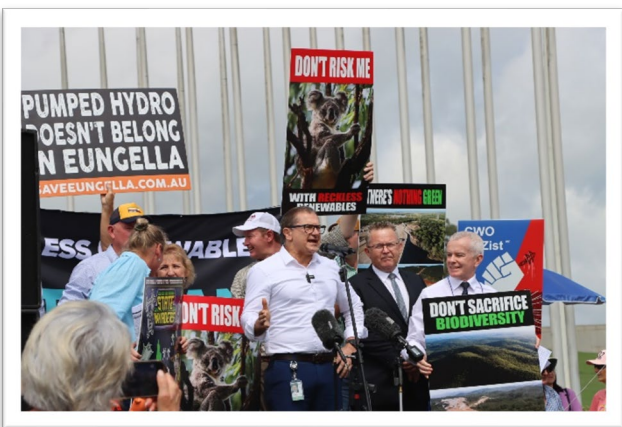
*Noosa Women's Shed
January 2024*



*Parliamentary Friends of Road Safety Forum
February 2024*



*Parliament House National Showcase
February 2024*



*Reckless Renewables Rally at
Parliament House
February 2024*





Joint Committee on Law Enforcement visit to the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation in Brisbane, February 2024



Llew with Clare Stewart and Ross Fisher at the Noosa Head's Surf Lifesaving Club March 2024



Former Leader of the National's in the Senate Ron Boswell's Biography Launch, March 2024



Sunshine Beach Surf Lifesaving Club March 2024



Parliamentary Friends of Law Enforcement and First Responders, March 2024



*Gympie Music Muster Thank You Party
February 2024*



*Official opening of the Maryborough
Air Rifle Range, January 2024*



*Llew with John Barounis at the
Maryborough Markets, April 2024*



Despite cash being an essential part of our economy and way of life, many banks are closing down their ATM's and no longer offering cash over the counter at their branches as fewer people are using cash. It's clear when it comes to cash, it's "use it or lose it". Let's show the big bank CEO's that cash is still king!



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