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Primary industries and fisheries commitments

Our Minister, Tim Mulherin, outlined the following commitments and future direction during the election campaign.

A strong record on Primary Industries and Fisheries Queensland's \$13 billion primary industries sector remains an economic bright spot in the current global recession, Primary Industries and Fisheries Minister Tim Mulherin said today.

"The sector continues to grow and provide jobs for more than 100,000 Queenslanders," the Minister said.

Mr Mulherin said Primary Industries and Fisheries needed to be flexible and focus on services to address the business demands of modern food production.

"A re-elected Bligh Government will focus on world class service delivery that addresses the critical challenges facing food and agricultural production.

"We will build skills for our future food and agriculture workforce, deliver innovative research partnerships to grow investment; and network and modernise world class services.

"This Government is improving productivity growth, promoting Queensland's produce to national and international markets and investigating sustainable use of resources and ways of combating climate change."

"We will upgrade our IT platform to make services integrated, modern and user-friendly, with 50% of our services delivered online by 2012.

"We will provide three additional mobile offices to reach as many food producers as possible and to support emergency responses.

"The Government will also provide the Queensland Farmers Federation and Agforce with \$300,000 in joint funding over three years to improve the capacity of rural industries to engage in regional planning initiatives state-wide."

The Minister said the Bligh Government's 'fresh approach' initiative focuses on delivering world class research and development science to improve productivity and sustainability outcomes for the sector.

Research, development and extension "hubs" will attract domestic and international investment and ensure effective research and development.

"As part of our 'fresh approach' we are developing a new \$8 million Agri-science hub in Mareeba
<<http://statements.cabinet.qld.gov.au/MMS/StatementDisplaySingle.aspx?id=60926> to focus on Research, Development & Extension (RD&E),

education and training on the Atherton Tablelands.

"The Bribie Island research centre is undergoing a \$5 million redevelopment and \$33 million was spent on a new Centre for Advanced Animal Sciences at Gatton."

Mr Mulherin said the Bligh Government is also committed to spending \$290 million for a Health and Food Sciences Precinct at Coopers Plains and an Ecosciences Precinct at Boggo Road.

"The beef industry will receive a \$32 million injection that includes a \$13 million biosecurity lab at James Cook University in Townsville.

"We're developing a new \$5 million Queensland Centre for Advanced Agriculture that will address better agricultural environmental outcomes in Queensland, including Climate Change preparedness, water use efficiency and farm Management Systems.

The Government is also establishing a new Plant Science Centre of Excellence on the Darling Downs and a new Science and Training Precinct for Horticulture at the DPI&F Research Station at Bundaberg.

"The food and agriculture sector continues to grow and will create close to 10,000 jobs for skilled labour over the next three years based on current growth projections," Mr Mulherin said.

To meet industry needs, in 2008, the Bligh Government transferred the five agricultural colleges to Primary Industries and Fisheries to forge closer relationships between industry and the training and education programs provided by the Australian Agricultural College Corporation (AACC).

"The Gateway Schools initiative will be expanded to 15 schools in 2010 to provide career pathways through direct employment or vocational and educational training," the Minister said.

"We will also provide 10,000 hours of tailored training to Queenslanders affected by the downturn in the mining sector to re-skill and to take advantage of jobs in the primary industries sector.

The Bligh Government released Australia's most comprehensive biosecurity strategy in November 2008 and is a leader in implementing national biosecurity reform.

"Queensland is the frontline state for biosecurity threats," Mr Mulherin said. "Our capacity to respond effectively to major biosecurity incursions will underpin the safety and quality of our food, as well as jobs in regional areas.

The Minister said if re-elected, the Bligh government will implement Queensland's Biosecurity Strategy, including an Emergency Management Unit to handle biosecurity threats.

"A dedicated Control Centre will be established to respond to

biosecurity outbreaks; and a high-level Advisory Council will give industry the opportunity to have input into key biosecurity issues."

Mr Mulherin said new and contemporary legislation for biosecurity would be introduced as part Queensland's Biosecurity Strategy.

"We will review biosecurity science capability and infrastructure to ensure Queensland's investment in biosecurity science is targeted where the risk is greatest.

"To develop a risk managed approach to biosecurity responses and resources we will work with the Federal Labor Government," he said.

Under a re-elected Bligh Government, the state's commercial forestry plantations will be expanded with new land acquired for softwood and hardwood plantations in the Rockhampton and Gympie regions.

"Hardwood plantations will also be expanded in areas stretching from Kingaroy to Gayndah with an injection of \$48m over 3 years commencing 2008/09.

"The Government will spend \$7.5 million over three years for research and support to the forestry industry through genetic improvement and productivity.

"The purchase of new land for plantations and continued R&D in the forestry industry will keep about 30 employees in full time employment," the Minister said.

Mr Mulherin said almost a million people fish for a living, for recreation, or for traditional and customary purposes each year in Queensland.

"The 'Fishing for the Future Policy' will ensure sustainable fisheries for both commercial and recreational fishers," he said.

"A re-elected Bligh Government will commit \$10 million in grants to local Councils to construct 24 new pontoons and floating walkways throughout Queensland over the next three years.

"Local Councils can share in \$24 million in grants to construct or upgrade 15 new boat ramps by the end of 2012 and three new artificial reefs will be constructed, adding to the three the State Government has already committed to.

"The Bligh Government is committed to growing the worth of agriculture in Queensland to a \$34 billion industry by 2020," Mr Mulherin said.