



The Hon. David Littleproud MP
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T R A N S C R I P T

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Minister Littleproud iv 4BC with Neil Breen

NEIL BREEN: It looks like the Prime Minister will have to wait until Sunday to find out if his Coalition partners, the Nationals, will support his plan for getting to net zero emissions by 2050. He briefed Cabinet on the details of his plan yesterday. The Nationals have already said they won't make a decision until they all meet and discuss it this weekend. David Littleproud is the Deputy Leader of the Nationals, the Minister for Agriculture. He joins me on the line from Dalby. Minister, first, give us a storm update from Dalby overnight. It got hammered last night.

DAVID LITTLEPROUD: Yeah, it was a doozy. I was at a motel and about 2:30 this morning it just woke me up. Huge thunder and lightning here, and it just bucketed down, and it only just stopped probably about 40 minutes ago. So, I think the reports around 50 mil, so there'll be a bit of water running into the system, which is good. There's obviously a few that are trying to harvest at the moment, but will be a bit down and out, but, you know, that's, that's part and parcel of farming. It's good rain, it's learnt to rain again. And, you know, our farmers are finally getting rewarded for all their hard work. We've got decent seasons and high commodity prices. We just need to get it off the, off the paddock now.

NEIL BREEN: Just need some workers, David Littleproud.

DAVID LITTLEPROUD: Yeah.

NEIL BREEN: We need to get some, so we need to get some people into Wellcamp Airport Quarantine Facility and ship them west to Dalby.

DAVID LITTLEPROUD: Well, that's all about Wellcamp's going to be good for, mate.

NEIL BREEN: I know.

DAVID LITTLEPROUD: We've just got a white elephant, and a couple of hundred million, I suspect, Anastacia's pumped into Wellcamp. And the only ones that will probably use it is agricultural workers. But the international airlines have said, why go to Toowoomba when we can go to Brisbane? Which is fair enough. And so hopefully Anastacia will allow ag workers. We've got 25,000 sitting on the tarmac in 10 Pacific nations ready to come in, but the health orders are determined by Jeannette Young and Anastacia Palaszczuk. So we can't stamp visas until they decide to let them in. And I think Wellcamp would be a good facility to bring in hundreds, and then pump thousands through to get agricultural workers here. Because we've incentivised as many Australians as we possibly can to do this work, but they just not taking it up. And farmers don't have the luxury, mate, to sit around and wait for someone to turn up. When it's ripe, it's got to get off the paddock and onto your plate.

NEIL BREEN: We've become bloated, David Littleproud. A lot, a lot of people are happy to sit back and go, you know what? The Government has to fix my problem for me. And, like honestly, it

concerns me. You know, people were so happy to take JobKeeper and not take jobs; they wouldn't go to rural areas to do work when it was there; and, we've made it too easy for people.

DAVID LITTLEPROUD: Well, I agree. I think society shifted and, I mean, shifted because of this thing called aspiration too. I mean, you know, when I went to school mum wouldn't let me stay at home on the school holidays. I had to go and pick potatoes, or rockmelons...

NEIL BREEN: Yeah.

DAVID LITTLEPROUD: ... and eventually became a cotton chipper. And you know, these days they're becoming barista's, or working in the pubs or in cafés, and they're aspiring to go to, to bigger things, office jobs. But you know, this work, while it's hard at times, it is still rewarding - it pays very, very well. And unfortunately, we've got this structural shift in society, and this has been then exacerbated by COVID, and we just simply don't have the people on the ground to, to do the work. And you know, after years of drought our farmers are finally looking at making a quid, and there's no one around to help them. And we've been rushing to try and find men and women, but Australians, we've also tried to incentivise them, but they just simply are not interested in this work, sadly.

NEIL BREEN: Okay. In the Nationals Party Room, what's the feeling about zero emissions by 2050?

DAVID LITTLEPROUD: Well, I think the vast majority are very pragmatic. They want to understand the technology roadmap. You've got to understand that what the technology roadmap is, is about trying to solve an international problem. And because the world's shifting, the markets are shifting in terms of what they're using for energy sources. And so we have to make sure that can we protect that with technology, and, and can we look to new technologies to protect regional jobs. And that's what we want to understand, we want to get very granular about what that plan looks like. But the world has shifted and, you know, you're looking now- I don't think you're going to see that coal mines are going to shut down any time soon, I think you're still going to see them for decades to come. But there is a, there is a shift in terms of that energy use, but there's also new technology like carbon capture storage that, that may prolong the life, not only of our coal-fired power stations, but coal-fired power stations around the world. And what we're trying to do is, if you get back to first principle, it's reduce emissions. And if we've got, we've got infrastructure there that burns coal, it emits; if you're going to overlay another technology on that that reduces emissions, well, isn't that what we're trying to achieve? We're also seeing Japan is now also just trialling their coal-fired power station, mixing with ammonia, which we can, which we can also mine and send to, to Japan, and also keep our coal-fired power stations and gas going. And those are the types of things of technology. So what we're trying to do in the roadmap that, that we're working through now is to solve an international problem. But it is an international problem because it's going to hit us, and unless we try and protect Australian jobs, then people will be displaced. And that's what the National Party is trying to protect, particularly because these jobs are in regional Australia.

NEIL BREEN: And you've got a lot of seats to protect, particularly in Queensland, if the Coalition's going to retain power. This is a tricky issue. It's a tricky issue for both sides of politics. It's brought about the downfalls of opposition leaders and prime ministers for a decade and a half. But 23 seats in Queensland in the Coalition - six to Labor, one to an independent. There's a lot on the line in Queensland, and if regional jobs are under threat because of a zero-emission strategy by the Coalition, you can't afford to lose two or three seats in Queensland.

DAVID LITTLEPROUD: No, we can't afford to lose any seat anywhere. But we've got to be honest with the Australian public. The Labor Party's already signed up to net zero emissions by 2050, but they haven't told us how we're going to get there.

NEIL BREEN: No.

DAVID LITTLEPROUD: But that's what, that's what the Coalition, and particularly what the National Party is saying, is: yes, the Labor Party's trying to solve this international problem that's hitting our economy, that's going to transition our economy.

But we're going to be honest with people. We're going to look your square in the eyes and we're going to say, this is how we do it. This is the technology that we believe will be able to be implemented. And it has to have currency, it has to have veracity, and that's what we are making sure, as the National Party through this plan, getting very granular.

But we want to look people in the eyes here in Australia, but also around the world. Because we got good international standards. We've met Kyoto, we're going to meet and beat Paris. Yet we've got this self-loathing in this country that says we, Australia doesn't do enough. Well it's time to put our chins up and our chests out and say, you know what, we've done a bloody good job. And if we're going to commit to something, we'll, we'll look people square in the eyes and we'll have currency in being able to achieve that. And I think, you know, as a nation we've had, we've had extremes from both side that just really need to cool their jets and let the adults work through this and find a pathway. And that's what this technology roadmap will be about. But it has to be about honesty. And just blindly sign up to something. There's about a 130-40 countries signed up to net zero at the moment, I think about 20 can tell you how they're going to get there.

So that's what the Labor Party's signed us up to as a nation, but someone's going to have to pay for it. And this is what we're saying, is: we need to understand who's going to pay for it, how can we get there, and how do we keep our international standing. And if that takes a little bit longer, then we'll do that. But the Nats are very pragmatic. We're not, we're not putting our heads in the sand. This is a, this is a problem in shifting in international markets of energy supply that we're going to have to solve, and we're trying to solve it with technology to protect jobs and create new ones.

NEIL BREEN: Deputy Leader of the Nationals, David Littleproud, Thanks for your time on 4BC Breakfast.

DAVID LITTLEPROUD: Anytime, mate. Great to be with you.

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