

30 July 2015

Research Director  
Agriculture and Environment Committee  
PARLIAMENT HOUSE QLD 4000

### **Submission to the Review of the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme**

#### PREAMBLE:

I've just completed six months in the Central West. (I worked there for 17 years in the 60s, 70s & 80s).

Most of the Central Western graziers are heading into a fourth year of drought. I doubt that any are spending their own money after having severely reduced incomes for all of that time. However, they still have to face the rising costs of maintaining their properties – rent to the State Government, rates to Local Government, insurances, electricity etc.

Many, of course, can't even pay these – they're added to the increasing debt. I was told by one Local Council CEO that at least 100 properties are marked for foreclosure when the drought breaks!!

There could be a wholesale exodus of grazing families from the Central West when the drought breaks. Can Governments afford this loss??

There is a desperate need for "CASH RELIEF" for family held property owners to survive this prolonged drought which wasn't of their making, and is beyond their control.

#### SUBMISSION:

I wish to suggest the following amendments to the drought relief scheme:

- 1) A suspension on rents to the State Govt. – not just a delay in paying them.

This drought is exceptionally long and could hardly have been envisaged in deciding an "average season" for rental purposes. Surely the land is rented by the Govt. on the assumption that the 'renter' will make an income from it.

Is the Government MORALLY able to charge rent when – through no fault of the graziers – the land fails to produce; and in fact becomes a liability!!? But people find it almost impossible to leave because so much of their past earnings are tied up in the improvements they've made to their properties!!

- 2) Consideration should be given by both State & Federal Governments to making grants to drought affected Local Governments so that they can survive & give rate remission to drought- affected graziers.
- 3) That the State Government consider giving remissions to drought-affected properties for electricity charges.

The State needs its "Farmers". Since 86% of Queensland is drought declared, maybe the financial pain should be shared by all.

Yours faithfully

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