

**SUBMISSION INTO THE REVIEW OF QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT DROUGHT
ASSISTANCE MEASURES**

I attended the Tambo Forum and firstly, let me say thank you to the Committee members and Ann Leahy and Lachlan Miller for attending. Following this meeting and discussions with Ms Howard and Mr Rob Hansen after the meeting, I wish to make the following points.

1. **Not all Drought Declared Regions are Equal.** While we are getting quite bad around some parts of Tambo, we do not compare to the Longreach area, where even the best graziers have had to destock. Similarly the rain from Mungallala east should temporarily suspend these graziers from assistance such as freight and water subsidies. **Recommendation – there should be various levels of drought assistance in declared areas.**
2. **Drought Assistance from Federal and State Governments –** Most graziers (including myself), do not really take into account what assistance comes from the State and what comes federally - it is all the same bucket to us. This year, even with reduced breeder numbers, but with use of feedlots and agistment for steers, we have received the best money ever for our premium Angus cattle. For this reason, we are currently on the margins to pay tax, but will most certainly at the end of the financial year. While we are extensively and expensively feeding two thirds of our property (where no storm rains have fallen), we are not claiming any freight subsidies as they are tax deductions anyway. Many in our district, with reasonable management skills, should be in the same position. Similarly with new water infrastructure, they are fully tax deductible and we can do it our way – not the cheap way that some bureaucrat in Longreach or wherever says is deductible. Similarly, if I was making freight subsidy claims for stock feed, I would have to justify it, because our grape silage and hay is coming over 1,000 kilometres. We have a wonderful supplier who continually sources the best available for us and gets hay and grape silage to us, when we need it. These types of people are rare as it takes considerable stress off our shoulders trying to source good quality fodder. **Recommendation– eliminate the 1,000 kilometre justification and control of water projects – usually the graziers want to build better for a reason and so it lasts.**

3. **Prospect of Dam Desilting being included in the \$20,000 per annum allowance.** There was considerable discussion on this matter at the Tambo Forum. I would say that at this stage of the drought in the Tambo area, all our dams have gone dry and we have had to pipe our bore water to all areas of the property some time ago. For this reason, we have chosen not to desilt any more dams as there is already bore water in the vicinity, but more importantly, what scarce funds we have left we will keep to feed stock as we do not know where it is going to end. Also, when it does rain, we have forward sold as many stock as we can and so our income will be reduced for some time in the future. I would also add that one large (and important) dam a few years ago cost us in the order of \$30,000 to do! **Recommendation– by all means include dam desilting but still keep the limit to \$20,000 and let them decide how they choose to spend this allowance.**
4. **Other types of Assistance.** I mentioned after the Tambo Forum that we are not claiming any type of Government Assistance, but what we would appreciate would be visitors come and visit for a week or so and just help us feed in the mornings and cook some meals to take the pressure off that way. I suggested setting up a web site (or something similar) where they may access our details etc. I know this could be fraught with danger as many places can be cruel to their stock and not feed them or look after them, but hopefully this could be sorted in the property details. It would only apply to those people who had some extra time and wanted to help in some tangible way. **Recommendation – set up some sort of interactive web site.**
5. **Stop handing out Government Assistance to those who are never going to change or who inappropriately spend their money.** It seems obvious to us that many of the same people access the maximum assistance each drought cycle and never improve their management or get out of their rut. We constantly see some receiving government assistance often going on holidays or being alcoholics. **Recommendation – Review drought claims for enterprises from drought to drought and check if their business model has improved prior to these people receiving more money. Some are never going to make it on the land and should**

get off sooner rather than later and without taxpayer dollars propping them up, year after year.

6. **Cotton Seed.** One of the best drought feeds available is cotton seed. It is becoming increasingly more difficult to source as the Chinese are buying it for their dairies. While I understand the logistics would be very difficult – storage etc – it would be wonderful if a certain percentage of the cotton seed from the harvest each year could be purchased by the Government and then sold to Australian farmers on a cost plus basis. If the demand is not there from Australian farmers, it could then be onsold to overseas countries. **Recommendation – set up and operate a cotton seed bank.**
7. **Education.** One of the issues raised was the lack of special assistance for remote students education during drought times particularly around Longreach where they have little or no income. **Conclusion – I wholeheartedly endorse helping those in extreme circumstances as children should not be disadvantaged by the parents being tied to the land.**
8. **Six Month Time Limit** – There has to be a cut off point at some point in time and generally six months seems reasonable. If there is an excellent reason why the claims could not be in within the six months, then pay the claim. **Recommendation – Leave the existing six month limit in place.**
9. **Concessional Loans.** Anecdotally, these seem to be only available to very marginal farmers. Some level of financial acumen needs to be assessed prior to giving any concessional loans out as it is government funds and should only be available for restocking purposes, after good general rain has been received. **Recommendation – Concessional loans should only be available after good, general rain has been received and should only be for restocking purposes and with a sound financial plan.**

In summary, we all have choices to make and in this case we generally choose to be on the land, so generally we need to deal with the consequences of drought. I think there is far too much emphasis on Government assistance in times of drought whereas the big issues facing the industry include the consequences of the cost of the land (and lack of Australian buyers), the impacts of this for 'Mum and Dad' farmers trying to retire, the lack of

superannuation for many self operators (there are rarely the funds), the exhorbinent cost of freight and other rising costs. Generally, there is a lack of profitability in the land unless you are extremely careful. These, I believe, are far bigger issues than short term drought.

Submitted by:

MARILYN CLIFT

“ISOROY”

TAMBO QLD 4478

████████████████████

██