



Speech by

Hon. Tim Mulherin

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Rainman

Hon. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries) (10.21 am): It will come as no surprise to members of this House that the department of primary industries is often at the cutting edge of science and research. In the worst drought in recorded history, DPIF technology is paying dividends for our resilient primary producers. Demand for a climate management software program developed by the DPIF has never been greater. Rainman is a CD-based software package of rainfall information designed to assist in the management of rainfall variability. Rainman contains historical monthly and daily rainfall data for about 3,800 locations and monthly and daily stream flows for 400 locations throughout Australia, plus monthly rainfall records for 9,500 locations throughout the world. What that means for farmers is that they can calculate chances of monthly and seasonal rain, display historical data as tables or graphs, and forecast seasonal rain, dry periods and effective rain for their own location.

This software is the first of its kind anywhere in the world and can help primary producers develop their own profitable and sustainable enterprise management systems. Rainman, now in its fourth edition, sells nationally to farmers, graziers, bankers, consultants, insurance companies, schools, universities and other government departments. The DPIF team of agriculturalists who developed Rainman realised that there was an abundance of data from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology, but farmers had no way of interpreting what it meant for them on their property. An international version of Rainman with additional special data is used by all national meteorological services in the 10 ASEAN countries.

Rainman can forecast seasonal rainfall based on the southern oscillation index, can group locations for spatial analysis, import monthly and daily rainfall and stream flow data, and print results as tables, graphs or maps. It enables farmers and graziers to take ownership of their climate related decisions by having access to all the relevant local information rather than a broadbrush regional forecast. Producers can see what chances they have of getting the rainfall they need in the coming season and so make appropriate management decisions. Rainman is an invaluable tool in extremely difficult times and it shows that DPIF is meeting the challenges head-on.