



Speech by

**Hon. Tim Mulherin**

**MEMBER FOR MACKAY**

Hansard Thursday, 23 April 2009

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## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **North-West Queensland, Beef Industry**

**Hon. TS MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland) (10.05 am): Mr Speaker, congratulations on your appointment as Speaker of the 53rd Parliament.

Last week I travelled to the north-west for the third time this year on a flood related trip. I am absolutely committed to protecting jobs in the region's beef industry, which is valued at \$420 million. During the floods we provided \$500,000 to support the successful fodder drop operation. Then to help the industry get back on its feet we established the North-West Beef Industry Recovery Task Force. The task force is putting together a series of workshops in Normanton, Burketown, Croydon and Julia Creek to help producers accelerate their recovery. There will be special veterinary advice on herd fertility and production. A pasture scientist will attend and there will be advice on financial assistance available. Other practical help includes supervising Longreach agricultural college students who helped repair hundreds of kilometres of flood damaged fences.

We are also assisting producers from 13 properties who are dealing with the aftermaths of 10 mine spills. We have based a senior officer in Mount Isa to help draw up individual property management plans for all affected properties. Part of this process is to map out how each property was run pre spill and how they will run post spill. Some grazing areas will have to be fenced off to keep cattle away until the clean-up is complete, and these maps will greatly assist in planning. Initial blood testing shows no contamination of cattle, but more testing is being done and will continue into the future.

Yesterday, in a meeting organised by the member for Mount Isa, I met with other ministers and agencies to discuss the way forward on the mine spill issue and I passed on the insights gained on my trip. On this trip I visited six properties affected by either flooding or mine spill issues and met with 22 cattle producers and agribusiness operators. While the worst-hit areas will take time to recover, it is important to note that many properties are experiencing their best seasons in years, and this will boost the region's economy and help protect jobs.