



Speech By  
**Hon. Cameron Dick**


**MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE**

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Record of Proceedings, 31 August 2016

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

### **Rural and Regional Queensland, Mental Health Services**

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (2.15 pm): Notwithstanding the recent rains in rural Queensland, 84 per cent of Queensland remains in drought. The Palaszczuk government is also acutely aware that the drought has taken its toll not only on the economy and on the profitability of individual farms but also on the mental wellbeing of some people in rural and regional Queensland. In last year's budget we allocated \$1.5 million to primary mental health support to be delivered through the Royal Flying Doctor Service. In November last year we backed this with the \$3.5 million Tackling Regional Adversity through Integrated Care scheme. Part of this scheme has funded the appointment of nine new mental health clinicians to help deliver services in rural and regional Queensland.

Last week in Mount Isa as part of the scheme I announced an allocation of \$600,000 to 16 programs across rural and regional Queensland that will allow communities to address mental health issues in a manner that they believe is best for them. We have had a very strong response from around the state to our call for applications for this fund. We were looking for community resilience-building strategies, projects and activities to develop and promote community networks, build awareness of mental health issues and encourage individuals to seek help if needed. The projects selected serve every part of the state that has been most impacted by the drought, from the Darling Downs through to Western, Central and North-West Queensland. The projects include Lifeline on the Darling Downs and south-west Queensland as well as the Callide Valley Men's Shed. I know that the member for Callide is pretty handy with a hammer and he no doubt knows the men's shed well. This latest measure is another initiative of this government to tackle mental health issues caused by the drought in rural and regional Queensland.

While in Mount Isa I also launched the Queensland Rural and Remote Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2016-18, which provides a framework for addressing mental health issues in rural and regional Queensland. The plan sets priorities and outlines 28 actions to improve the mental health and wellbeing of people living in rural and remote Queensland. The action plan, developed by the Queensland Mental Health Commission—and I thank the Commission and the Commissioner, Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck, for their work—also identifies opportunities for partnerships with non-government organisations and communities.

Drought remains a serious problem and this government is well aware of mental health issues associated with the drought. Our strategy is to work locally with organisations that have good community links so we can reach individuals who would otherwise be unwilling to contact individual services. We are well aware that the drought is having an impact beyond economic consequences and we will work with people in rural Queensland to support our fellow Queenslanders struggling because of the drought.