




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Regional Queensland, Drought

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (2.50 pm): I rise to advise the House of the worsening drought situation in regional Queensland. Inland Queensland has had a very cold, severe dry winter and the severe frosts have contributed to further drying of the whole region. My electorate, which is larger than the state of Victoria, is dry and dusty and the surface water, if not already evaporated, is diminishing very quickly. These conditions take a toll on animals and those farmers who are doing the daily feed and water runs.

Farmers are finding it difficult to source feed for their stock. I know that some are transporting feed from as far away as Victoria. I am also aware of rural produce agents who are rationing feed so that they have enough to share around to all of their customers. I think that is a very concerning situation. Unfortunately, the Palaszczuk Labor government with its vegetation management laws has increased the red tape and the costs for those farmers who want to manage their mulga for drought stockfeed. Mulga needs to be managed for it to be useful for stockfeed. Managing mulga is just like people mowing their lawns. It regenerates and it regenerates well as a very good stockfeed. We also see towns in regional New South Wales running out of drinking water, and I have concerns that without some rain in the spring we will see a similar situation in regional Queensland communities.

I have been fighting to have the Western Downs Regional Council placed back on the drought list. The Palaszczuk Labor government took this shire off the drought list some four months ago. I wrote to the minister for agriculture earlier this month asking for the Western Downs drought committee to be permitted to reconvene. I am pleased to advise the House that due to my representations the committee has had the opportunity to reassess the situation, and I am advised that the Western Downs local drought committee is currently assessing and reassessing the need for a drought declaration in that area. I call on the minister to act immediately the local drought committee makes a recommendation and re-declare the area to the drought list.

This government needs to stop sitting on its hands and help these farmers who are dealing daily with the impacts of drought in the Western Downs and also many other areas of the state. This Labor government is procrastinating and penny pinching, and I will not give up the fight to have the Western Downs area drought declared because I understand the impact this drought is having on the region, unlike this government.