




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning) (9.53 am): As we have seen from the wild weather that struck the state last month, the disaster season is well and truly upon us. We have seen severe storms in the Scenic Rim, Fraser Coast, Gympie and South Burnett. Some farmers just recovering from Cyclone Debbie have had their crops destroyed again. As honourable members may be aware, there are four categories of disaster assistance available under the joint Commonwealth and state funded Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements and the new Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements which come into effect today: categories A, B, C and D.

The rules around NDRRA and the DRFA are controlled by the Morrison government. However, the Commonwealth has made the rules so complex and so unfair that many severely impacted individuals and communities must go without and recover on their own with no assistance at all from the federal government. In particular, the rules around the activation and eligibility of category C are so inflexible that some impacted primary producers, small businesses and not-for-profit agencies cannot access assistance when they need it. Earlier this month communities in the South Burnett, Fraser Coast and Gympie were impacted by the 'hailnado' where farmers lost their crops and their income, but according to the federal government category C assistance is not even on the table.

On 28 May 2018, I wrote to the then federal minister responsible for natural disaster funding, Angus Taylor, asking for a review of the strict criteria for category C to make it more humane, flexible and less mathematical when determining need and eligibility. Unfortunately, the Morrison government does not share the Queensland government's sense of urgency. On 6 July the minister advised that the Commonwealth will be reviewing community recovery 'at some time after the implementation of the new DRFA from 1 November 2018'. That time is now!

Canberra does not get cyclones and it does not get flooded too often, so maybe that is why the federal government does not care about reviewing the inflexible rules around category C before some vague time in the never-never. Disaster assistance should be there to support community recovery and not hinder it. Now is the time for the Morrison coalition government to stand up for our vulnerable Queensland farmers and small businesses and make category C disaster assistance fairer, less complex and more readily available to those who need it most.