




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Western Queensland, Drought

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (2.42 pm): I rise this afternoon to place on the public record my concern for Western Queensland communities who have missed out on yet another wet season. Just over two months ago I stood in this place talking about the drought. At that time a little over 400 millimetres of patchy rain had fallen over parts of Western Queensland. People were hopeful and for a short moment they were relieved; however, it did not take long before the hot and dry conditions soaked up what was left of those fleeting storms. Now the westerlies have set in, the temperatures have dropped and the hope of a late season has faded.

This year marks seven failed wet seasons for communities across the central west. As I travel around Gregory I hear veterans and the old-timers of the rural industry talk about the severity of this drought. They have never seen it this bad before. They are comparing it to the 10-year drought of the sixties. After seven failed wet seasons, and with no income and no end in sight, people are at their wit's end. They are strung out financially, physically, emotionally and mentally. To add insult to injury for graziers, for the first time in many years beef and wool prices are holding strong. This comes at a time when the majority of graziers are destocked or feeding what few breeders they have left. Few have the financial capacity to restock, and many are not willing to roll the dice without the promise of any decent rain.

This is the cruel reality for primary producers throughout my electorate. Families, small businesses and graziers are all struggling. Without a doubt, seven years of unrelenting drought conditions have taken their toll not only on graziers but also small businesses and the community in general. Facing seven years of this drought is like a natural disaster but it is a slow, creeping natural disaster. Right now we are facing seven years without a proper wet season. Our economy was built on the back of agriculture. It is now our state's second largest export industry. Without family farming and grazing businesses our agricultural industry will simply not survive.

I call on those opposite, the Labor Party, to understand the severity of the situation not only in my electorate of Gregory but across Warrego, Burdekin and Traeger. The drought has sadly become a hallmark of shires from the McKinlay right through to shires on the border in the south. As elected representatives, we need to do what we can to support our rural communities and the agricultural industry during what is, quite simply, one of our darkest hours. The drought is continuing. We have to wait for a wet season in another eight months. We need people to survive.