




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Drought Assistance, Review

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (9.44 am): The Palaszczuk government is keeping its promise to put Queenslanders first. That means building on our plan to deliver the quality services that all Queenslanders deserve. The clearest evidence of this is our consistent commitment to provide assistance for primary producers who live in drought-stricken parts of the state. Since the drought began, the Queensland government has allocated more than \$670 million to help our farmers on the land. That does not mean that we should not look to see whether there are better ways in which we can better prepare for future droughts.

We want Queenslanders to help shape the future of our drought program by attending a regional forum or submitting their thoughts online. It is vital that producers give to the independent panel their feedback on what can be improved and how better resilience can be built in the future. With drought foremost in people's minds, now is the best time to work with industry and the community to review government, industry and community actions through this drought and think about improvements for future droughts.

Ruth Wade and Charles Burke have been appointed to an independent panel to run the review and make recommendations to improve resilience and assistance for future droughts in line with national drought policy. Being former chief executive officers of the Queensland Farmers' Federation and AgForce Queensland respectively, Ms Wade and Mr Burke have a strong industry background and understanding of the pressures of drought in rural communities.

The panel is holding forums in six regional locations and is seeking written submissions through the drought program review website until the end of October. Forum locations include Ayr, Bundaberg, Charleville, Cloncurry, Dalby and Longreach. I encourage community members to attend these forums to have their say or submit their thoughts online for the panel to consider.

I would also like to update the House with respect to the drought status of the Western Downs Regional Council. Today I have instructed my department to partially drought declare the eastern part of the shire area. I table a map of that declaration.

Tabled paper: Map depicting rainfall percentile for 12 months to August 2018 in the Western Downs [[1381](#)].

Also, in April the local drought committee recommended the council area have its drought status revoked. Since then, in my view, the committee process has been manipulated for political gain. The LDCs are meant to be free of political interference to avoid lobbying and so the members are free to make unencumbered decisions based on science that will serve the community for the coming 12 months. Given that, I believe that the committee has been compromised. I have instructed my department to relieve the LDC of its duties.

Furthermore, while I am on the subject of drought, the Queensland Drought Appeal today reached \$2.7 million—an excellent achievement. Also, as we heard from the Premier earlier in the week, the bipartisan Queensland government fundraiser has sold out. I am encouraged that everyone is participating and assisting our farmers in times of need such as this.