




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TRAEGER

Record of Proceedings, 6 September 2018

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Drought

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (2.12 pm): I rise to talk about the drought. It has not been talked about enough in this parliament. There have been too many distractions. Rural debt and drought are big issues and they have been handled clumsily at both the federal and state levels during the drought in the north in previous years as well as the current drought in Central Queensland and New South Wales.

One important thing that needs to be delivered—and it can be delivered at the state or federal level—is a rural development bank. Similar to what was included in the bill that I introduced into parliament last term, which was voted against as was a similar bill that was introduced into the federal parliament by my father, a rural development bank can capture the finance that is available in the commercial banks. No-one seems to want to admit to this. I love to debate this issue with anyone because they cannot take a long-term view. They are constrained by APRA guidelines. They cannot take a long-term view of some lenders. Many farmers who do not deserve to go will be swallowed up in this drought because the lending instruments are not flexible enough to take a long-term view.

The government cannot access cheap diesel, cheap hay, cheap molasses—or lick—but it can access cheap money. While welcome and needed at the moment, giving farmers a \$10,000 grant is not a long-term measure. Saving \$100,000 on a farmer's interest bill is something that can help. The last time we did this in Queensland—there was no cost to the taxpayer—we sold it for \$1.3 billion, the QIDC. There is an answer that can save people \$100,000 or more and does not cost the taxpayer anything. We have done it throughout our history to stabilise in the long term.

The other thing we should have been doing many years ago is constructing water-harvesting dams. These are the things that in the long term would help us get through these droughts without always having to talk about knee-jerk reactions in which we have to get through the media cycle and hand out something in a flash or make an announcement. We should have been doing this so we can get through these protein droughts and have the ability to shuffle our cattle around the national herd instead of dumping them on the markets. That needs to be done.

The transport rules is probably a lesser issue but it is no less important. In times of drought, a lot of livestock hauliers are copping fines in relation to driving hours when they are trying to transport droughted livestock. Things need to be considered differently in the time of drought. These things need to be done and they are not long term. I was pretty annoyed yesterday to hear the federal agriculture minister talking about a 10 cent levy for the dairy farmers when twice we have had a bill before us in this chamber to provide a 10 cent levy for the dairy farmers. This is a more sophisticated version of providing a levy to the farmers. They are the long-term things we need to do. We will continue to put those before the House and on the agenda. I hope that other members agree. We need to take a more long-term view when we are dealing with drought and the impact of drought on rural industries.