




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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ADJOURNMENT

Drought Declarations

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (7.23 pm): I rise tonight to let people know that, yes, we have had rain in Western Queensland. However, I can tell honourable members that the drought continues. As we say out west, the green grass from this rain is painted on. We have endured over eight years of drought in Western Queensland and we have had some good rain. However, it certainly continues to be a drought economy in Western Queensland and in Central Queensland. The recent rains have not been drought breaking, even in the Central Highlands district.

The southern part of the Central Highlands Regional Council area has now been drought declared, and I thank the minister for that drought declaration. I do have a few issues with that as only half the shire has been declared. The shire has been cut in two along the Capricorn Highway. My concern with that is that someone on the northern side of the Capricorn Highway does not benefit from the drought declaration which they so desperately need. They have to go through an individual drought status process. I understand that and this is what the minister will say. However, that is time consuming and it involves a lot of paper and a lot of confusion.

If we are going to drought-declare the Central Highlands Regional Council area, I call on the minister to drought-declare the whole shire because it has gone through drought like many parts of Western Queensland. In fact, before this rain, things were desperate in the Central Highlands Regional Council area; we had not seen rain for a very long time. In fact, the Fairbairn Dam, which is our major water source, is only at 17 per cent. That reduced capacity has a huge impact on not only the cattle industry but also the valuable irrigation area around Emerald. At the moment producers there are busy planting chickpeas and wheat, but looking for water allocations past the end of this financial year may make it difficult for them to finish off those crops. We certainly need crops to be able to get into the summer season with the cotton crop. We have to remember that the Central Highlands Regional Council area is virtually the size of the state of Tasmania—over 60,000 square kilometres.

Finally, the floods have had a huge impact in North-West Queensland. Again, we are hurting out there at the moment as we have had massive stock losses. We have also had massive stock losses recently, especially sheep, in the Blackall-Tambo area due to Cyclone Trevor. I am calling on both the state government and the federal government to make sure that area has the same access to funding as North-West Queensland. The impact on the Blackall-Tambo area and west of the Landsborough Highway has been devastating. We hear of people who have lost 5,000 or 6,000 sheep and a thousand head of cattle. Those people in the Blackall-Tambo shire need to have the same access to funding as those in North Queensland because they need it desperately.