




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Drought, Support

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (9.55 am): Queensland agricultural producers are suffering the impact of the drought that has been ongoing since 2013. A staggering 66.1 per cent of Queensland's land area is drought declared, as at 18 November 2019. This figure of 66.1 per cent represents 33 council areas and four part council areas in drought. The part declared shires are Charters Towers, Flinders, Isaac and Whitsundays. There are also 56 individual droughted properties in a further 10 local government areas. I encourage those who are in the areas that are not drought declared but are impacted by drought to seek information on an IDP by calling DAF. An IDP gives assistance through the DRAS entitlements.

Our support for Queensland farmers affected by drought remains steadfast. We always stand shoulder to shoulder with them. The area of 66.1 per cent may not be the highest percentage of the state declared in this current drought, but it does represent an ongoing financial impact to the sector. In 2019-20 the total value of Queensland's primary industry commodities, which is the combined gross value of production and first-stage processing, is forecast to be \$17.8 billion, which is five per cent less than 2018-19 and six per cent less than the average for the past five years. For 2019-20 the gross value of production for Queensland's primary industry commodities at the farm gate is forecast to be \$13.9 billion, which is five per cent less than 2018-19 and seven per cent less than the average for the past five years.

These numbers indicate the true economic impact of drought. Behind these numbers are the primary producers. Every Queenslanders stands behind our primary producers in drought. Last week I went west of Toowoomba to speak with drought impacted families. I spoke with Kerri, who, with her family, is battling terrible drought conditions in managing a cattle farm while keeping a small business running on the side as well as looking after the family. These are the real human faces of drought. They are feeding their cattle every day, looking after their reduced stock numbers as best as they can while their family pitches in to keep everything working.

I would like to congratulate the *Courier-Mail* on its recent campaign #backthebush, putting the stories of our farmers and their struggles with drought front and centre for all Queenslanders. For much of this year I have been promoting the concept of #eatqld, urging every Queenslanders to buy the magnificent fresh produce that we have grown and farmed right here. With our farmers doing it tough through drought, this campaign should be especially supported this Christmas. When people are preparing their Christmas dinner, they should make sure they are supporting our primary producers by buying fresh, local Queensland food to savour this festive season. All Queenslanders this Christmas should reach out to our primary producers and support our agricultural sector in regional towns by sourcing Queensland produce and Queensland-made Christmas presents by visiting the regions and praying for rain as well. Rain would be the best thing for our farmers in droughted areas, and I am sure every member in this House eagerly awaits that happy event.