




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 2 December 2021

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Drought Assistance

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (2.16 pm): It is a proud moment as the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries to stand in this place today to announce new drought support measures for Queensland's farmers. In 2018 the Premier and I went to Canberra for the National Drought Summit. From there, we committed to reforming our drought support programs in line with the National Drought Agreement, and we delivered a report by Charles Burke and Ruth Wade recommending those reforms. Although a La Nina event has been declared and there are predictions of wetter than average conditions over the summer, it is not raining everywhere and some producers are entering their eighth year of drought. In fact 64.7 per cent of Queensland is in drought currently. Of course our thoughts are with those who are currently suffering flood impacts because of recent rain.

Today we are launching new drought assistance programs that will help our farmers to be better prepared for future droughts. We are expanding drought program eligibility to primary producers across all industries and removing the requirement to be in a drought-declared region to access the new preparedness assistance. Our reforms include supporting producers through farm management grants to develop a farm business resilience plan to identify pathways to help them manage climate and other risks. They can also apply for drought preparedness grants of up to \$50,000 and low-interest loans to implement drought mitigation measures. When in drought, they will have access to low-interest loans to help their operations.

More farmers than ever before will be able to receive support to prepare their properties for drought conditions. We have listened to industry and worked alongside them to make sure we got the details right. These reforms fulfil a major election commitment to reform drought support to bring it up to date for the innovative, creative and dedicated Queensland producers of the 21st century. Just as we promised, producers in drought-declared areas currently accessing the existing assistance programs can continue to receive that assistance for as long as the current drought lasts. In fact, they will have the option of choosing between staying on that assistance or transitioning to the new assistance. My department will continue to work with industry and other stakeholders to provide information and assistance to producers through information sessions across Queensland starting next year once the loans are available.

Queensland's new drought reform measures will back our farmers to be better prepared for the next drought, wherever they are. The Palaszczuk government has always backed our farmers and we will back them shoulder to shoulder with these reforms. I am really proud to get out in the regions and meet our farmers. They are the salt of the earth. Once again, I call on all Queenslanders to support them leading into Christmas by buying Queensland produce. That is why I am known in the region as 'Furner, the farmers' friend'.