




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 12 May 2022

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Drought Declarations

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (10.48 am): I rise to inform members that the drought-declared status of a number of areas of the state will be revoked from today due to a strong wet season and improvements in conditions on the ground. The result of these revocations is that the proportion of the state that is drought declared will fall from 61.1 per cent to 44.9 per cent. I think all members of this chamber would welcome that improvement in conditions. Drought declarations will be revoked in the following areas: Balonne Shire Council, Maranoa Regional Council, Murweh Shire Council, North Burnett Regional Council, Western Downs Regional Council, Quilpie Shire Council, and the part-declared areas of Flinders Shire Council.

All of these revocations have been recommended by the local drought committees in those regions and I have accepted those recommendations. They follow the end of the drought-declared status of 11 South-East Queensland council areas last month. Primary producers in those areas can now access freight subsidies for restocking or returning livestock from agistment under the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme.

These decisions are not made on the basis of a single rain event. Our local drought committees carefully weigh up the entire wet season and the full impacts of conditions on the ground. Where drought conditions remain, so too do the drought declarations. Of course, a significant weather event is underway at the moment and it could further impact conditions and future drought declarations. This morning I was speaking to Carl Walker from the Bowen Gumlu Growers Association who said that while some of the rain was welcome there will be some flow-on effects for the winter season.

Importantly, our drought support reforms mean primary producers no longer need to wait for drought declarations before accessing support. Our focus is now firmly on drought preparedness and there is a range of grants and low-interest loans available through QRIDA to facilitate that. My department will be running regional forums on the new Queensland drought assistance programs and on farm business resilience planning to help our farmers make the most of those programs. As always, whether or not we are in drought, the Palaszczuk government is standing shoulder to shoulder with our farmers.