

## QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1523

Asked on Wednesday, 29 November 2006

**MR HOBBS** asked the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries (MR MULHERIN)-

### QUESTION:

With reference to the fact that many farmers practice good drought management practices by reducing their stock numbers in many cases by up to a third or more of their herd. However, because they introduce onto their property a number of breeding stock of both sexes amounting to less than one percent of their total herd, they are denied assistance under the Drought Fodder Freight Rebate Assistance Scheme—

Is it possible for such cases to be assessed on a case by case basis rather than on an inflexible 'one size fits all' approach as occurs under the current guidelines for the scheme?

### ANSWER:

The Drought Relief Assistance Scheme (DRAS) is designed to assist property owners across the state keep existing stock on the property alive and to assist in the return of stock to the property after the drought declaration has been lifted. To introduce livestock to a drought declared property is contrary to the intent of the drought policy. When stock are introduced to a drought declared property a suspension period applies from the date the stock were introduced up to 16 weeks after these stock or an equivalent number are removed from the property.

However, in light of the continuing drought conditions prevailing throughout Queensland, the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) has made some major changes to the current DRAS policy to further assist primary producers during these difficult times. Recent changes to the scheme include:

- When older breeders are sold weaners/heifers can be introduced onto a property as a one to one replacement without producers facing a suspension period on freight subsidies. Allowances are currently made for bulls at a ratio of four percent to breeders.
- The upper DRAS ceiling limit of \$30,000 per property per financial year has been extended to \$40,000 for producers who have been drought declared for more than two years.
- As agistment is becoming harder to source, many livestock are being genuinely forced off properties and have to return home. Previous policy only allowed transportation subsidies for one agistment movement per drought period. This has been amended to allow for more than one trip.
- Producers with restocking credits will now be allowed to buy breeders and place them on agistment while their shire is drought declared. They can also claim transportation subsidies when they bring them home after the drought declaration on their property has been revoked.
- Restocking credits will be recognised for livestock sold out of feedlots.

- Primary producers will have access to both DRAS through DPI&F and Drought Carry-on loans through QRAA. Previously producers had to make the choice between these schemes.

Each application submitted through DPI&F is assessed on a case by case basis on its own eligibility within the DRAS guidelines and policy.