

QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 269
Asked on Tuesday, 6 March 2007

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

QUESTION:

With reference to the announcement on 4 December 2006 regarding the Drought Rate Rebate Scheme—

- (1) Will he explain why, if two farmers who for instance live on adjoining farms and are both declared Exceptional Circumstances, only the one who is in receipt of Centrelink Exceptional Circumstances Relief Payments is eligible for the Drought Rate Rebate Scheme?
- (2) Will he confirm that the rate rebate will be retrospective from 1 July 2006 for all eligible farmers?
- (3) When will his department be in a position to accept applications and provide the funds to drought affected farmers?

ANSWER:

- (1) The objective of the Drought Rate Rebate Scheme is to offer assistance, through a rate rebate, to primary producers who are in severe financial hardship. Primary producers who are in receipt of the Exceptional Circumstances Relief Payments (ECRP) have been subjected to a means test by Centrelink which is considered to be a fair and equitable method of determining hardship.

The scheme will utilise ECRP as a substitute for a separate means test to make application to the scheme as simple as possible and to identify those in most need. Using the ECRP will also reduce the time taken to assess applications and provide the funds to eligible primary producers.

- (2) The eligibility period includes rates levied by a local council from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2008 and eligible applicants will receive the rebate for payments already made this financial year.
- (3) QRAA began accepting applications from 22 March 2007 and funding is available for payment to eligible primary producers.