QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 560
Asked on 17 April 2008

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

QUESTION:

Will he give an undertaking to the people of the Beaudesert Electorate to extend the exceptional circumstances assistance for at least another year to help farmers and small businesses finance recovery plans, taking into account that a lot of farmers, after seven years of drought, have also recently suffered the devastation of very damaging floods?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Government does not decide which areas receive Exceptional Circumstances (EC) assistance. The EC program is administered by the Australian Government's Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries. Accordingly, the decision about which areas are eligible for EC assistance is made by my Australian Government counterpart the Honourable Tony Burke MP on the recommendation of the National Rural Advisory Council (NRAC).

EC assistance is therefore quite distinct from drought assistance provided by the Queensland Government. Until 12 March 2008 the former Beaudesert Shire was drought declared under State processes enabling primary producers to access State drought assistance such as the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme (DRAS) which provides freight subsidies for the movement of fodder, water and stock.

The recent decision to revoke the drought declared status of the former Beaudesert Shire was made on the recommendation of the Local Drought Committee (LDC) for the area which is made up of primary producers and DPI&F representatives. These LDC's carefully review on the ground conditions such as pasture growth and water availability to determine whether drought assistance is needed for an area. Now that the region is no longer drought declared, primary producers will be able to claim freight subsidy for livestock returning from agistment and for the transport of stock purchased for restocking to assist them with the drought recovery process.

In regard to the recent flooding event, a range of assistance measures were made available to residents and primary producers in the Scenic Rim Regional Council area under Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA). These included concessional loans to primary producers and small business and freight subsidies for primary producers.