

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1700

Asked on 15 September 2016

MRS FRECKLINGTON asked the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries (HON L DONALDSON)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the South Burnett Drought Revocation—

Will the Minister provide details of the South Burnett Drought Committee, including (a) how many meetings have been held throughout 2015 and 2016, (b) how many members are on the committee, (c) how are the committee members chosen and (d) are minutes of the committee meetings available to the public?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question.

- (a) Since they were established in 1982, Local Drought Committees (LDCs) have provided recommendations to the Minister in the primary industries/agriculture and fisheries portfolio on drought declarations and revocations across Queensland. The LDCs meet annually at the end of the expected summer rainfall period and throughout the year, when necessary. Any member of the LDC can request that a meeting be held.

The South Burnett LDC has met three times in the past two years – in May 2015 and April and August 2016.

- (b) It has been established practice that Committees are made up of a Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) officer as chair and industry organisation representatives from the various primary industries in that area. Primary producers who are not affiliated with any industry organisation, may also become members, as can DAF officers with expertise relevant to that particular area.

There are eight members of the South Burnett LDC, made up of one DAF officer and seven local primary producers.

- (c) The local knowledge that primary producers have of conditions in their district is invaluable in supporting the DAF officer in making equitable decisions regarding the drought declaration and revocation process.

Industry members are nominated by their respective industry association. If there is no nomination from industry in a particular geographical area, the chair of the committee can extend a membership invitation to a primary producer with recognised skills and knowledge of the impacts drought has on industries in that particular area.

- (d) The Queensland Government keeps the details of membership of LDCs confidential to protect the identity of members as they are required to provide recommendations based on objective assessments of local conditions, which can affect their fellow primary producers. Given the sensitive and private nature of some of the tasks undertaken by LDCs, all committee members are required to sign a confidentiality agreement to maintain the integrity of the LDC process.

In line with this requirement, minutes of LDC meetings are not available to the public.

This confidentiality process has been in place since the establishment of LDCs in 1982.

May I take this opportunity to thank all LDC members across Queensland for the significant voluntary contribution they make to their committees through the Queensland Government's response to drought.