

Question on Notice

No. 22

Asked on 12 February 2019

MR L MILLAR ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to low rainfall this summer in the Central Highlands resulting in the Emerald Golf Course placing restrictions on all players, members and visitors to protect the course—
Will the Minister advise when the drought status of the Central Highlands Regional Council area will be reviewed?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question.

As Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries, it is my responsibility to make drought declarations and revocations based on recommendations from the Local Drought Committees (LDCs).

The LDC process has been in place since 1982. Each LDC is made up of representatives of the various industries in that particular Local Government Area (LGA), with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' Regional Climate Risk Coordinator as Chair. The LDCs meet at least once a year at the end of the summer rainfall period to assess seasonal conditions and make recommendations to me about the drought status of their area. The LDC can also meet at other times of the year.

The threshold for drought declared status is principally a 12 month rainfall deficiency likely to occur no more than once every 10 to 15 years. LDCs also consider a number of criteria when determining the drought status of an LGA, including:

- water and pasture availability
- condition of stock
- the extent of drought movements of stock to forced sales or slaughter and to agistment
- quantity of fodder introduced and whether other abnormal factors, such as high temperatures and winds, have affected the situation
- the number of Individually Droughted Property (IDP) declarations that have been issued
- prevailing weather conditions such as winds and temperatures.

The Palaszczuk Government recognises that some LGAs are large and, as a whole, do not meet the criteria, but localised areas may. Therefore, primary producers who are located in an area which is not drought declared, but believe they are experiencing drought conditions can apply for an IDP declaration. An IDP gives the same access to Palaszczuk Government drought assistance as an area declaration.

I expect the Central Highlands LDC will provide its annual advice at the end of the wet season, which usually occurs in April. As we are still in the wet season, hope remains for potential rain.

It should be noted that the LDCs do not include the condition of golf courses in the drought declaration process, instead focusing on the previously highlighted criteria.