

Question on Notice
No. 590
Asked on 4 April 2019

Mr R Katter asked the Premier and Minister for Trade (Hon A Palaszczuk)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the eligibility for Category C assistance from the Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) for primary producers and businesses affected by flood damage in the Charters Towers Regional Council and Etheridge Shire Council areas—

Will the Premier instruct QRA to extend assistance on a case by case basis to those drastically affected by floods in these shires who are not currently eligible?

ANSWER:

A range of assistance measures exist under the joint State and Commonwealth Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) to support individuals, families, small businesses, non-profit organisations and primary producers, in Charters Towers and Etheridge who have been impacted by the North and Far North Queensland monsoon trough event during 25 January to 14 February 2019.

Although DRFA assistance measures are jointly funded by the Queensland and Federal governments, the guidelines that determine eligibility and policy are set by the Federal Government.

Meeting the Federal Government's requirements for DRFA Category C activation is complex, with strict assessment and approval processes.

The guidelines governing Category C assistance do not allow it to be extended on a case-by-case basis as Category C is designed to support a holistic approach to the recovery of regions, communities or sectors severely affected by a major natural disaster.

Unfortunately, when taken as a sector, primary producers and small businesses in Charters Towers and Etheridge do not meet the thresholds determined by the Federal Government for DRFA Category C activation.

The Honourable Cameron Dick MP, Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning, has previously raised concerns about eligibility for Category C funding with the Federal Government and was advised that this matter would be considered in a future review of arrangements. Minister Dick has recently asked the Queensland Reconstruction Authority to once again seek a review of eligibility criteria with the Federal Government.

For primary producers to be eligible for Category C funding, the Queensland Government must demonstrate that:

- more than 33 per cent of primary producers in the sector are directly affected;
- those primary producers have incurred losses worth more than 20 per cent of the Gross Value of Agricultural Production in the sector; and
- primary producer viability or production in the sector is at risk of disruption beyond the current season.

Other eligibility criteria must also be considered, including a primary producer's right or interest in the land for purposes of a primary production enterprise; the percentage of their annual income that is derived from that primary production enterprise; and their intent to re-establish the enterprise.

For small businesses to be eligible for Category C funding, the Queensland Government must demonstrate that:

- more than 33 per cent of small businesses in the sector are directly affected;
- the average individual small business losses/damage are at least \$75,000; and
- the community in question is at risk of losing essential businesses as a direct result of the disaster.

I encourage all impacted primary producers and small businesses in Etheridge and Charters Towers to contact the Federal Government's Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority to determine what assistance is available including under the Federal Government's DRFA eligibility rules.