Budget to continue to tackle widespread drought

The Queensland Government’s 2015-16 Budget includes $52.1 million for much-needed drought relief for primary producers.

Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries Bill Byrne said the greatest challenge currently facing the sector was the prolonged drought across much of the state.

“The State Government is responding to the most widespread drought on record,” Mr Byrne said.

“More than 80 per cent of Queensland drought declared, covering 32 entire local government areas and three part local government areas.

“Our election commitment is to continue the pre-existing drought relief arrangements until 2018.

“We indicated this would be reviewed if the drought continues. To date the Queensland Government has increased the cap under the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme from $30,000 to $40,000 for producers with a Drought Management Plan entering their third and subsequent year of drought,” he said.

The 2015-16 Queensland Drought Assistance Package will consist of a number of measures, including:

- the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme (DRAS) administered by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries ($32.5 million). DRAS provides freight subsidies for moving fodder and water during drought and a 50 per cent rebate on the purchase of emergency water infrastructure.
- relief on electricity charges for irrigators administered by Ergon and the Department of Energy and Water Supply ($2.5 million)
- a waiver of annual water licence fees and a 100 per cent rebate of land rent increases for producers in drought declared areas administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines ($4.1 million)
- primary mental health support through the Royal Flying Doctor Service administered by Queensland Health ($1.5 million)
- social and community support to assist community wellbeing administered by the Department of Communities ($4 million).

“My department will also tackle the spread of pests and weeds in drought-affected areas through combined research and control management action, and assist the Australian Government to deliver its drought package, including the drought concessional loans,” Mr Byrne said.

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