



Queensland Drought Tightens Grip: 79pc Drought Declared

THE most extensive area of Queensland on record is officially in drought following today's announcement by Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Dr John McVeigh, 79 per cent of the state is now drought declared.

The announcement takes the total number of shires fully declared to 38 in addition to a further four that are partially declared and 38 Individually Droughted Properties (IDPs) in another seven Local Government areas.

AgForce General President, Ian Burnett, said never before had the state's agriculture industry experienced such widespread and severe dry conditions.

"This drought is one which has hit with great ferocity across an unprecedented area of our pastoral and agricultural land and we now find ourselves in a situation where almost 80pc of the land mass is severely drought affected at the tail end of a wet season," Mr Burnett said.

"Despite their best efforts to prepare for drought, a great proportion of our primary producers are vulnerable both financially and personally during this extraordinary weather event.

"We have been very aware of the deteriorating conditions in the South East of the state and welcome the State Government's acknowledgement of the worsening and spreading conditions through this latest round of drought declarations."

Earlier this year Premier Campbell Newman announced an additional \$20 million in drought funding for the remainder of the financial year, while Prime Minister Tony Abbott last month committed to a \$320 million federal assistance package.

Mr Burnett said if resources were appropriate, coordinated and accessible to producers across each of the drought affected areas.

"With many more producers likely to seek access to available assistance we expect the Federal and State Governments will be making every effort to streamline the application processes and provide enough resources to ensure timely processing of applications."

Mr Burnett also urged producers to revisit their drought management plans in light of predictions the next few months are likely to trend near to below average rainfall.

"As this drought worsens and spreads producers must, if they have not already, make tough decisions as to what is going to be best for both themselves, their businesses and their livestock at this time," he said.

“While there is some assistance available I also urge producers to do what they can to manage this extraordinary event and to implement their emergency plans.

“Rain is all that will alleviate this situation but even after drought-breaking falls this drought will take up to three years to recover from and this must remain part of our decision-making process.

“In the meantime, AgForce will continue to work closely with all levels of Government to communicate our members’ needs and to respond to this extremely challenging time within our industry.”

Newly declared shires include:

Banana, Bundaberg, Cherbourg, Fraser Coast, Gladstone, Goondiwindi, Gympie, Moreton Bay, Noosa, North Burnett, South Burnett, Southern Downs, Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba and Western Downs.

- For a full list of drought declarations and information on state assistance go to:
<http://www.daff.qld.gov.au/environment/drought>
- For information on Federal assistance go to:
<http://www.daff.gov.au/agriculture-food/drought/assistance>

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Who is AgForce? AgForce represents thousands of Queensland broadacre producers who recognise the value in having a strong voice. AgForce leads the way to ensure agriculture’s social, economic and environmental contribution is recognised by all levels of government. AgForce works alongside landholders, encourages and supports the next generation, builds industry partnerships and skills and promotes agriculture - for secure, sustainable, progressive and profitable food and fibre into the future.