

Katter calls for better delivery of drought assistance

Written by Liz MacIntyre



Brisbane 20 November 2013. Member for Mount Isa, Rob Katter said with only nine out of more than 18,000* Queensland graziers taking up the \$650,000 Farm Finance Concessional Loan, it's clear there needs to be a better system of drought assistance for desperate graziers.

“This is a take up of only 0.047 per cent, so the Government needs to look at other measures, such as working through the Australia Reconstruction Development Board,” Mr Katter said.

There were only 44 applications for the Farm Finance Concessional Loan, so it appears the program has not delivered.

Even the Queensland Government's much touted Drought Relief Assistance Scheme hasn't delivered the \$7 million estimated by the Government on 30 May, Mr Katter said.

“That was the amount they were boasting they were going to use to help drought-stricken farmers, and we're six months down the track, the drought has worsened, the graziers are in a desperate state, and the Government's only spent just over \$2.5 million on freight subsidies and emergency water rebates.

“This is money graziers had to pay out of their own pockets first, then fill in the paper work and finally get reimbursed 50% of what they'd spent.”

Included in figures supplied by the Agricultural Minister, Dr John McVeigh, in response to Mr Katter's Question on Notice [attached], was a pricing of grazing in national parks and reserves at \$2.2 million in free agistment, which Mr Katter said was “a bit of a stretch”.

He also noted that the 40 Mental Health and Psychological Health first aid courses hadn't yet commenced.

“For the past six months I have been trying to alert the Government to the urgency of the drought situation.

“Cash injections would be welcome but what we really want is a sustainable outcome from the current situation which is the Australian Reconstruction Development Board, or the equivalent to the old rural bank.

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“This provides the safety net so desperately needed to stop the industry from haemorrhaging,” Mr Katter said.