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MEDIA RELEASE

Farmers deserve fair go on disaster

A recent decision to make graziers in the Charters Towers Regional Council and Etheridge Shire Council areas eligible for grants to recover from the monsoon event earlier this year has prompted Member for Burdekin, Dale Last, to request equal treatment for primary producers in the Whitsunday Regional Council area.

The Special Disaster Assistance Recovery Grants provide up to \$75,000 to assist with clean up and reinstatement costs but are only available in defined areas, usually based on local government boundaries.

“There are horticulturalists and graziers in the Gumlu and Collinsville areas that sustained massive damage from the monsoon event who are not eligible due to their local government area not being disaster declared,” Mr Last said.

“Recently graziers from areas that weren’t disaster declared were made eligible for the funding due to the damage they sustained so I am simply asking for primary producers in the Gumlu and Collinsville areas to be given the same treatment.”

“The funding is provided jointly by the state and federal governments so I have taken the first step and written to the Premier asking for her support.”

“If the Premier is happy to support it then I will pursue it with the federal government but we need cooperation at both levels to get a fair go for our locals.”

Mr Last said that, in most cases, the grants system had worked well but, like all programs, there were issues that should be addressed for future events.

“It’s good to see the different levels of government working together but there were some issues raised that, moving forward, should be reviewed to ensure the system works as well as possible,” he said.

“Natural disasters don’t follow council or state boundaries so some flexibility is needed.”

“Ideally, you would like people who are affected to have quick and easy access to these grants to get them back on their feet as soon as possible and, by and large, we have that but there is always room for improvement.”

“If there are farmers or graziers who were affected and haven’t applied for the grants I would encourage them to make an application because they now have up until February 28th to get their applications in.”

“If applications are declined there is a process for having them reviewed and I am more than happy to go into bat for primary producers who feel they aren’t getting a fair go.”

“In a lot of areas, whole communities rely heavily on agriculture for jobs and the flow-on economic effects so we need to ensure we are doing whatever we need to do to ensure that sector recovers as soon as possible.”

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