

DROUGHT — SOUTHERN RANGELANDS

**965. Mr K.M. O'DONNELL to the Premier:**

Pastoralists are doing it tough in the southern rangelands, including the goldfields, with a lack of rainfall over the last few years, dams drying up and having to truck-in feed.

**The SPEAKER:** Just the question, please.

**Mr K.M. O'DONNELL:** Has the Premier written to the commonwealth government requesting that it declare a drought in the region; and, if not, why not?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

I thank the member for Kalgoorlie for the question. It is a very serious issue for those families and communities that are confronted by drought. As we know, across Australia, particularly in some parts of the eastern states, the situation is replicated and is very serious indeed. The southern rangelands have been experiencing a dry period for some time, and the reality is that the condition of the land has been deteriorating for some decades due to a range of reasons. We are finalising a list of priority drought initiatives to submit for federal funding from the Prime Minister's drought package so that Western Australia gets its fair share. I attended the drought summit in Canberra in December last year. We indicated at that point that we wanted to be part of any initiatives, and that they should not all be eastern states based. We will be submitting our drought initiatives shortly.

Minister MacTiernan and Minister Kelly raised these issues with the federal ministers at a forum last week. There is a range of research and development projects to improve the feed base and pasture growth, and to regenerate the degraded and dehydrated rangelands. As a state, we have a dry season response program underway and we are working closely with pastoralists to support seasonal management and decisions. Department of agriculture officers have visited more than 100 properties across the state since July to ensure that advice is provided on what assistance is available, both nationally and at a state level. The government is carting emergency water to the Shires of Lake Grace, Kent, and Ravensthorpe to support livestock producers in their animal welfare needs. We have spent more than \$1.1 million at 18 sites to refurbish and develop new water supplies, and improve dams, catchments and storage of strategic emergency livestock water supplies in affected areas.

The advice I have is that a drought declaration is not required in order to access ongoing assistance measures and there has not been a drought declaration since 1989. We can get assistance from the commonwealth without a drought declaration. I understand that other states do not declare drought, either. Assistance is sought via existing programs and, indeed, the new program that the commonwealth government is putting in place. There is a range of other initiatives and support services available for pastoralists and farmers, which I will not read out, provided both by the state and the commonwealth. I urge anyone affected by drought, in particular the pastoralists in the southern rangelands, to go to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development website if they are not aware of the assistance measures—there are a range of others—so they can access those assistance measures and find out what they are.

*Point of Order*

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** The Premier appeared to be reading from an official document. I ask that it be tabled.

**The SPEAKER:** Is it an official document, Premier?

**Mr M. McGowan:** They are prepared for Parliament, Mr Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** Can I have a look?

**Mr M. McGowan:** They are not official documents.

**The SPEAKER:** They are only speaking notes.