



REGIONAL COUNCIL

Livestock Farming Drought Support

Action Plan

INTRODUCTION

Lockyer Valley Regional Council hosted a *Livestock Farming Drought Support Forum* on Sunday 22 September 2019 to hear directly from livestock owners about the current scope and impact of the drought for them, and what mitigation measures might be most meaningful.

The forum was attended by 59 community participants and 10 elected representatives from local, state and federal governments. Of the 72 community members who registered (including both pre-registration and on the day) 57 indicated they farm livestock. Only 4 participants indicated that they are not involved in livestock farming, and another 11 provided rural addresses consistent with livestock farming. The statistics above indicate that the forum was attended by a predominantly livestock farming representation of the wider community.

Participants worked through a series of seven questions at tables which were facilitated by Council staff so that farmers were free to discuss their ideas without having to take notes. Notes on key points were recorded on large sheets of paper which have been retained and transcribed by Council. The last question (Q7) focused on the top 4 items each table wanted to take collective action on over the next 6 months. The table facilitators reported the answers to Q7 back to the whole room before participants were asked to complete an evaluation of the event.

This Action Plan is a consolidation of all answers to Q7 at the forum (the top 4 items each table wanted to take collective action on over the next 6 months), grouped into 6 key themes. The Draft Action Plan was distributed to forum participants and made available to the public for review prior to finalisation.

The Plan is intended as a guide for all stakeholders on the recommended actions that will best assist local drought-affected farmers during drought conditions. It is intended as a shared action plan, where all levels of government, support and service agencies, farmers and the community need to do their part.

Council will provide periodic reports on the implementation of the Plan.

The Livestock Farming Drought Support Action Plan was endorsed by Lockyer Valley Regional Council on Wednesday 13 November 2019.

1. Drought Relief – Financial and Resources

#	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Comments
1.1	Encourage local drought relief donations to stay local via an ongoing media campaign	Farmer representatives Lockyer Valley Regional Council	Immediate and ongoing	Media stories by farmers will be more effective than from government. Council can assist in coordinating media
1.2	Provide access to cheap feed and water <u>for stock</u>	Charities – drought support and general	Immediate and ongoing	Council to promote the contact information for all relevant charities that can assist
1.3	Provide immediate subsidies for feed and water	Charities – drought support and general	Immediate and ongoing	Council to promote the contact information for all relevant charities that can assist
1.4	Provide access to cheap water and food for families and assistance with other household costs	Charities – drought support and general	Immediate and ongoing	Council to promote the contact information for all relevant charities that can assist
1.5	Reduce, subsidise or assist with Council rates	Lockyer Valley Regional Council Charities – drought support and general	Immediate and ongoing	Council to promote hardship payment options Council to consider deferring interest and extending discount periods Farmers in need of support to contact relevant charities which will contribute to rates
1.6	Facilitate and/or lobby for access to lower cost water (stand pipes access, availability and costs)	Lockyer Valley Regional Council	TBA	Council to continue liaising with Queensland Urban Utilities on options to increase

				standpipe availability and possible reductions in bulk water prices at standpipes
1.7	Provide assistance in purchasing water and/or power costs	Farmers	Immediate and ongoing	Farmers to contact electricity companies to discuss hardship arrangements and rebates Farmers to contact relevant charities for assistance with water and energy costs
1.8	Proactive contact from support providers	Lockyer valley Regional Council and Rural Financial Counsellor	Immediate and ongoing	Council to liaise with the Rural Financial Counsellor to coordinate the range of support services to attend more community events to increase their accessibility
1.9	Financial subsidies for freight and drought proofing projects such as improving dams, water efficiencies, etc	Commonwealth and State Governments via elected representatives Farmers	TBA Immediate and ongoing	Relevant governments to review relevant programs and improve accessibility and eligibility where possible. Farmers to review and apply for existing subsidies (www.daf.qld.gov.au or via a Rural Financial Counselling Service www.rfcssq.org.au)
1.10	Coordination of bulk purchasing and distribution of local fodder (to offset the 40% increase in costs)	TBA	TBA	This may be best done by Rural Aid, Drought Angels or QCWA – or a locally-based charity such as Lions Club
1.11	Ensure equitable access to grants / funding	Commonwealth and State Governments via elected representatives	TBA	Relevant government departments to review their eligibility to ensure that farmers have equitable access to each category of funding

				and that grants for innovation are promoted separately to grants and assistance for drought support
1.12	People to help prepare applications	Farmers via Rural Financial Counselling Service	Immediate and ongoing	Rural Financial Counselling Service (www.rfcssq.org.au or call Rachel on 0477 056 074)
1.13	Utilise appropriate government-owned land and resources as stock feed/watering sources such as harvesting grass from road and land reserves, utilise Queensland Urban Utilities' waste water for irrigation, etc.	Commonwealth, State and Local Governments via elected representatives	TBA	Relevant governments to review capacity, legal and liability, and viability with a view to maximising available resources.

2. Drought Relief – Financial Counselling and Mental Health Support

#	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Comments
2.1	Improve promotion, awareness and ease-of-access to mental health support services	Lockyer Valley Regional Council and Support Agencies	Immediate and ongoing	Council to liaise with drought support agencies to increase awareness and accessibility. Includes: Media, events, posters.
2.2	Improve promotion, awareness and ease-of-access to rural financial counsellors	Lockyer Valley Regional Council and Support Agencies	Immediate and ongoing	Council to liaise with drought support agencies to increase awareness and accessibility. Includes: Media, events, posters.

2.3	<p>Promote and utilise neighbourhood / community groups to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Share information – Talk, email etc. ○ Council and support agencies to come and provide information 	<p>Lockyer Valley Regional Council and Support Agencies</p> <p>Farmers</p>	<p>Immediate and ongoing</p>	<p>Council to liaise with drought support agencies to attend community group meetings and events.</p> <p>Farmers to actively participate in local community networks and groups and share information with family, friends and neighbours.</p>
2.4	<p>Proactive contact from support providers at saleyards, display days, produce stores and agricultural supply companies, etc</p>	<p>Lockyer Valley Regional Council and Support Agencies</p>	<p>Immediate and ongoing</p>	<p>Council to liaise with drought support agencies to attend key gatherings of affected livestock farmers such as at saleyards and display days.</p>
2.5	<p>Raise awareness of and/or lobby for more: local drought support coordinators, rural financial extension officers and/or Rural Financial Counsellors and Farm Household Case Officers</p>	<p>Commonwealth and State Governments via elected representatives</p>	<p>Immediate and ongoing</p>	<p>Ensure there are sufficient coordinators and support officers to meet the increasing needs of the Lockyer Valley and ensure they are well promoted and accessible.</p>

3. Government Assistance and Regulation

#	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Comments
3.1	Lobby for equalisation schemes to have a compulsory percentage of income set aside for income averaging purposes under the Income Tax Act administered by the ATO.	Commonwealth Government via elected representatives	Medium to Long-term	Representatives to table this initiative at relevant opportunities such as parliament, Joint Agency Drought Taskforce, etc.
3.2	Review asset testing as it is too restrictive	Commonwealth Government via elected representatives	Medium to Long-term	Representatives to table this initiative at relevant opportunities such as parliament, Joint Agency Drought Taskforce, etc.
3.3	Promote availability of low interest loans and review eligibility for all livestock owners.	Commonwealth Government via elected representatives	Medium to Long-term	Representatives to encourage relevant departments to increase promotion of low-interest loans, and; Table this initiative at relevant opportunities such as parliament, Joint Agency Drought Taskforce, etc.
3.4	Review and improve how information on drought assistance grants is delivered to those who need it.	Commonwealth Government via elected representatives	Medium to Long-term	Representatives to encourage relevant departments to review the effectiveness of marketing especially regarding areas without NBN and reliable internet access.
3.5	Review and ensure funding/grant processes are: more flexible, easier to access and include support people to help prepare applications.	Commonwealth and State Governments via elected representatives	Immediate and ongoing	Table this initiative at relevant opportunities such as parliament, Joint Agency Drought Taskforce, etc.

3.6	<p>Simplified access to Commonwealth and State funding and grants assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Less Red Tape ○ More one-on-one conversations ○ Aim to keep farmers on the land ○ Shorter, simpler application forms ○ Encourage government departments to share information with each other so that applicants aren't providing repetitive information ○ That an address is in a drought declared region should be obvious ○ Ensure consistent information is provided by online, call centres and in-person with department officers ○ Have a goal of <i>helping</i> people meet eligibility. 	Commonwealth and State Governments via elected representatives	Immediate and ongoing	Table this initiative at relevant opportunities such as parliament, Joint Agency Drought Taskforce, etc.
3.7	Reduce red tape and regulation that restricts farmers from drought-proofing such as drilling new bores water, vegetation clearing to increase grazing areas, etc.	Commonwealth and State Governments via elected representatives	Immediate and ongoing	<p>Table this initiative at relevant opportunities such as parliament, Joint Agency Drought Taskforce, etc.</p> <p>This may apply to grazing areas, use of vegetation for feed, access to water including allocations, etc</p>

3.8	Help new businesses to start up with minimal delay and bureaucracy	Commonwealth, State and Local Governments via elected representatives	Medium to Long-term	Table this initiative at relevant opportunities such as parliament, Joint Agency Drought Taskforce, etc. Review red tape and length of assessment periods
3.9	Support diversification and off-farm work through initiatives such as streamlined RPL (recognition of prior learning/existing skills)	Commonwealth and State Governments via elected representatives	Medium to Long-term	Table this initiative at relevant opportunities such as parliament, Joint Agency Drought Taskforce, etc.
3.10	Review duration of financial assistance noting that even when rains come it will take time for productivity and income to be restored and that ongoing help (subsidies) will still be required	Commonwealth and State Governments via elected representatives	Medium to Long-term	Table this initiative at relevant opportunities such as parliament, Joint Agency Drought Taskforce, etc.

4. Community Awareness				
#	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Comments
4.1	Gain media support to raise community awareness of drought conditions and impacts on Lockyer Valley farmers, families and the wider community including utilising local credible spokespeople	Working Group to be established with leadership from Lockyer Valley Regional Council	Immediate and ongoing	Working Group to seek the support of local and regional media outlets to promote the plight of local farmers and businesses. Council and farmers to work together in developing fact-based personal interest stories.
4.2	Gain media support to lobby State and Federal Government for increased support and assistance for farmers and communities	Working Group to be established with leadership from Lockyer Valley Regional Council	Medium to Long-term	Working Group to seek the support of local and regional media outlets to promote the plight of local farmers and businesses. Council and farmers to work together in developing fact-based personal interest stories.
4.3	Raise the concerns of drought-affected communities to the more urban parts of South East Qld	Working Group to be established with leadership from Lockyer Valley Regional Council	Medium to Long-term	Working Group to seek the support of major media outlets to promote the plight of local farmers and businesses. Council and farmers to work together in developing fact-based personal interest stories.
4.4	Develop a media campaign to educate the wider community on perceptions of water wastage and water conservation	Working Group to be established with leadership from Lockyer Valley Regional Council	Medium to Long-term	Working Group to investigate and promote campaigns focused on encouraging water restrictions in urban areas, education on farm water usage and needs, etc.

4.5	Raise awareness on how people can direct their donations specifically to the Lockyer Valley	Working Group to be established with leadership from Lockyer Valley Regional Council	Immediate and ongoing	Working Group to promote charities that can direct donations to the Lockyer Valley.
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5. Future Drought Resilience				
#	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Comments
5.1	Establish a local Drought Resilience Working Group	Initiated by Lockyer Valley Regional Council	Medium Term	Working group could include a range of local farmers, technology and industry representatives, UQ Gatton, Lockyer-Somerset Water Collaborative, SEQ Water, QUU, etc
5.2	Investigate options to improve drought-resilience for the region	Working Group	Medium to Long-term	
5.3	Investigate, promote and lobby for (if necessary) subsidies for on-farm water storage and efficiencies including subsidies for loan principal and interest repayments	Commonwealth and State Governments via elected representatives	Immediate to Medium-term	Table this initiative at relevant opportunities such as parliament, Joint Agency Drought Taskforce, etc.
5.4	Investigate, promote and lobby for (if necessary) financial subsidies for freight for fodder and water deliveries	Commonwealth and State Governments via elected representatives	Immediate to Medium-term	Table this initiative at relevant opportunities such as parliament, Joint Agency Drought Taskforce, etc.
5.5	Investigate feasibility of extending water mains further into rural areas for added water filling stations (eg, standpipes)	Queensland Urban Utilities (QUU) via Lockyer Valley Regional Council	Immediate to Medium-term	Council to continue discussing feasibility with QUU
5.6	Review farming practices regarding feed conversion by storing feed in good seasons and note that even when rains come it will take time for productivity to be restored	Farmers	Long-term	Farmers to share ideas, and seek support from peak farming bodies

6. Other				
#	Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Comments
6.1	Lobby for the development of a (national?) database of drought affected/non-affected areas of Queensland and NSW so that farmers have a better idea of where they may be able to sell/buy stock from	Farmers to review existing drought map website	Medium to Long-term	This is currently available at: https://www.pmc.gov.au/news-centre/domestic-policy/national-drought-map-now-available
6.2	Investigate the feasibility of <i>Why Leave Town?</i> -type local business gift card that keeps money local	Working Group	Medium to Long-term	Council has research on this already. Lockyer Chamber of Commerce & Industry has established a local card for member's businesses

For more information on this Plan please contact:

Community Development & Engagement

Lockyer Valley Regional Council

PO Box 82

Gatton Qld 4343

E: CETeam@lvrc.qld.gov.au

P: 1300 005 872

Ref: ECM 3864454