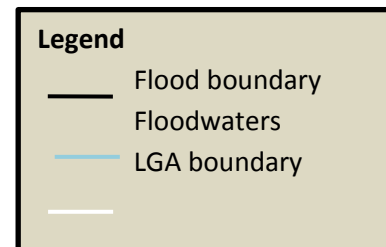




25 June 2019

Supporting North and North West Queensland primary producers to recover after the unprecedented 2019 monsoon trough event

Between 25 January and 14 February 2019, a monsoon trough over North and North West Queensland brought 12 days of continuous heavy rain, smashing rainfall records. The resulting floodwaters of more than 15,000 square kilometres, coupled with low temperatures and constant winds resulted in widespread and devastating livestock losses - estimated at 600,000 - were experienced in the Queensland Rangelands.



The North Queensland Livestock Industry Recovery Agency

On 1 March 2019, Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced the establishment of the North Queensland Livestock Industry Recovery Agency and appointed the Hon Shane L Stone AC PGDK QC as CEO and Advisory Board Chair.

The Agency represents the Federal Government's long-term commitment to rebuild the region long after the flood waters have receded. Reporting directly to the Prime Minister, it provides strategic leadership and coordinates the Federal Government's assistance efforts.

The Agency supported the immediate recovery assistance being provided by the Commonwealth and is now focussed on working with communities to develop a strategy for the long-term recovery of the region, with an initial focus on supporting primary producers. The guiding principle is that solutions must be "locally led, locally understood and locally implemented".

Mr Stone, Advisory Board members and Agency staff have visited the worst-hit regions in the Rangelands and coastal areas to meet with primary producers, councils, small businesses and local service providers. Over a third of Agency staff time has been spent in communities, hearing from people impacted to understand what support is needed.

Impacts will continue to be felt over the next few years, particularly for primary producers and the individuals and businesses that rely on them who have lost their income streams. Coupled with the flood impact, many of the Rangeland LGAs were previously, and continue to be, fully or partially drought declared – exacerbating the pressure on communities and the Rangelands environment.

Delivering financial support

The Australian and Queensland Governments responded quickly to provide the level of assistance needed to the affected communities. Overall, the Australian Government has committed more than \$3.3 billion to the impacted regions.

This assistance so far includes:

- Special Disaster Recovery Grants for Primary Producers (\$75,000)
 - \$68.8 million delivered as at 21 June 2019
- North Queensland Restocking, Replanting & On-farm Infrastructure Grants (Up to \$400,000 with a 50% co-contribution)
 - 15 grants of up to \$400,000, totalling \$4.7 million approved as at 21 June 2019.
- \$11 million to declared LGAs to provide such things as rate relief and carcass disposal.
- Over \$112 million paid to over 96,000 applicants in disaster recovery payments.
- 487 grants to small business of up to \$50,000, totalling \$6.3 million at 21 June 2019.
- 57 grants to not-for-profit organisations, totalling \$736,000.
- \$4 million to assist 25 school communities to recover from the floods.

In addition, the Agency continues to work with the Queensland Government to progressively roll out a jointly-funded \$242 million assistance package, which includes measures for flood mapping and warning, social wellbeing initiatives, support for business recovery, fodder supply and pest and weeds management.

Collaborating with local experts on a long-term strategy

The Agency is establishing localised connections to engage with experts in the region. Involvement in the Rangelands Policy Dialogue and development of the associated roadmap is beneficial to the work of the Agency to ensure no duplication of effort, and to gain valuable insights to consider policy options to ensure the future recovery, sustainability and resilience of communities and primary production.

With many of the flood affected areas back in drought, the development of sustainable solutions to pastoral care and resilience for surrounding communities is important for ensuring the economic security and pathways for stability.

One of the priority areas is environmental recovery which includes riparian and coastal repair, and weeds and pest management. The importance of stabilising and maintaining a healthy ecosystem in the affected area cannot be overstated, ensuring a collaborative effort across a wide range of stakeholders.

Conclusion

The Agency continues to consider ways to assist recovery with the most appropriate support at the time it is needed. We will keep working alongside and in collaboration with other government, industry and community organisations. Most importantly, our solutions will be developed in partnership with the communities affected.

Bio

Elyse Herrald-Woods is a Senior Policy Adviser for the North Queensland Livestock Industry Recovery Agency in the Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio. Elyse has extensive experience in national agricultural, biosecurity, environmental and water resource policy and programs.