

9.16 Drought Relief

441/19

RESOLVED (Schweikert/Harrison)

That:

1. The report be noted.
2. Council contribute a cash donation of \$10,000 to The Braidwood Community Help Fund set up under the auspices of the Braidwood Community bank and the Braidwood Life Centre to distribute to farming families affected by drought and bushfires and to support BlazeAid.
3. The following assistance be considered for drought and bushfire affected farmers and related business in the Local Government Area:
 - a. Conduct a social event for farming community in 2020.
 - b. Provide complimentary tickets to shows at The Q Theatre and/or entrance to swimming pools for the remainder of 2019/20.
 - c. Other than user and truck wash charges, waive the Braidwood Saleyards fees for 2019/20 and, if the drought continues for 2020/21, and adjust the budget accordingly (-\$130,000).
 - d. Extend the Farm Focus Business Development Program into 2020/21.
 - e. Subsidise private works on farm properties related to fire and dams reinstatement.
 - f. Publicise existing financial assistance related to rates and weed control.
 - g. Temporary measures to redistribute portion of rates from farmland rate category across the other categories in 2020/21.
4. Council amend the eligibility criteria for the receipt of financial assistance by farmers as being any parcel of land that is categorised as Farmland in the QPRC Local Government Area, and which is liable for the payment of South East Local Land Services rates.
5. QPRC Financial Hardship and Assistance Policy be reviewed to enable the extension of automatic hardship relief for farmland rate assessments for 2020/21.
6. Council continue advocacy to the Commonwealth Government to increase the FAG annual allocation (ie by the paused FAG indexation 2014-17) and minimise the population bias in the Act, to enable drought declared LGAs to:
 - a. directly rebate rates to farmland category properties and business directly reliant on farmland activity
 - b. establish reserves to leverage the Federal Government \$15m Weeds Fund and join state and regional agencies to invest in additional weed control measures on identified private farmland properties in those LGAs
7. Council consider staff resources in next Delivery Program to assist in the control of an expected proliferation in biosecurity weeds in QPRC.
8. Council consider assignment of part of the proceeds of sale of the share of Southern Phone to fund these initiatives.

9. Council lobby the Government for a structured relaxation of the eligibility criteria for farm subsidies.
10. Council lobby the State Government for a reduction in red tape that impacts on the property owners' ability to harvest water for farm dams.

The resolution was carried unanimously.