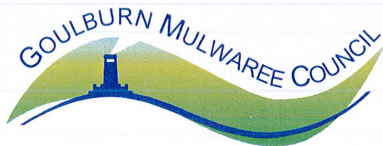


**SUPPORT FOR DROUGHT AFFECTED COMMUNITIES IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

Organisation: Goulburn Mulwaree Council

Date Received: 12 November 2019



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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6 November 2019

The Chairperson
The Legislative Assembly Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Committee Members

Subject: Drought Submission

Thank you for the opportunity of making a submission to your inquiry into the impacts of drought on regional NSW. The Goulburn Mulwaree Local Government Area is not badly affected by the drought at this time but with the long range forecast indicated a hot dry summer our community is bracing itself for significant impacts.

This Council undertook the courageous decision to drought proof the City's water supply in 2012 with the installation of an 81 kilometre pipe line from the Southern Highlands to Goulburn. This has given this community including business considerable confidence for Goulburn City to continue as an economic driver in the region. However if the drought does affect us badly over the next few months that confidence will be rapidly eroded as the community stop spending.

This Council believe it appropriate the State Government continue to provide financial stimulus into regional NSW in the form of infrastructure development and renewal. This can be through the grants programme on infrastructure that really makes a difference with long term benefits.

This Council has recently upgraded both the Water Treatment Plant and the Waste Water Treatment Plant. Stage two of those upgrades are planned over the next four years. As part of the waste water treatment plant upgrade Council proposes to use the high quality outlet water to irrigation around the city on park and reserves as well as making available to industrial users. The "Re-use Scheme" concept has wide community support. However all funding applications for 25% of the capital costs have been rejected because there seems to be a reluctance within the bureaucracy of State Government to support recycling of water projects. The government in our opinion should be supporting these initiatives to ensure the wise use of recycled water resources.

We were delighted at a recent meeting between the Canberra Region Joint Organisation and the Deputy Premier, The Hon John Barilaro MP that the Government was considering a \$125 million rate relief package to local government to help fund farmers and business enterprises that are suffering severe impact from the drought. This Council would strongly support this initiative as it a real and positive action that will make a difference to our communities.

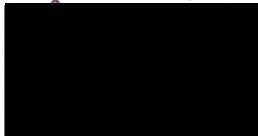
The other initiative we would like the State Government to consider is the criteria for the allocation of the Financial Assistance Grants (FAGs). Currently one of the criteria for these grants is based on population which of course benefits the metropolitan areas significantly.

If the State Government would make a change to the distribution criteria during this drought period to remove or substantially reduce the impact that the population criteria has on the monies allocated to Councils, then we could see some new monies come to regional and rural NSW that could be used for additional employment opportunities. We would be suggesting that if more money was available to Regional and Rural local government through FAGs then we could use the money for infrastructure development and create more local employment in our communities to assist those people who have lost an income because of the drought.

The final issue that this Council would like to raise is the issue of weeds management. The Bio-Security legislation will not provide enough incentives to land owners or authority to Councils to control weeds. When it does rain again the first thing to grow will be weeds. There has been a lot of feed imported into NSW during this drought period and that will almost certainly contain new weeds. The courts do not provide sufficient support to local government in the implementation of the Local Weeds Management Plan or the Act. The legislation needs to give Councils more support and encourage land owners to take real action when any weeds take hold of our rural landscape.

Council thanks the Legislative Assembly Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development for undertaking this inquiry and also thanks the committee for the opportunity of making a submission. If you require any further clarification please don't hesitate to call us.

Yours faithfully



Cr RJ (Bob) Kirk

Mayor Goulburn Mulwaree Council

