

Opinion

Andrew Broad

Member for Mallee

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TIME FOR SOME CREATIVE ACTION ON DROUGHT

Australia has experienced drought many times in the past and will experience drought again in the future.

Whenever farmers go through drought, the maintenance of key breeding stock is essential to assist in the recovery when the rain comes again, and it will come again.

This drought in Queensland and most of New South Wales is certainly severe. Fortunately most of Victoria is not in drought, however the coming months will determine the outcome of the season as soil moisture is low and relies on good spring rain.

The New South Wales State Government has implemented freight subsidies, but securing adequate fodder to freight is proving difficult.

Over the next few weeks, if spring rain fails to fall in Northern Victoria, the fodder producing capacity will be reduced. There is however significant opportunity to water hay crops in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation area to boost hay production, if water is available on the market.

The people of Australia hold water with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder. State Governments collectively hold water through various portfolios.

My farmer calculations tell me that a release of 100GL which is 100,000 Mega Litres could assist Goulburn Murray Irrigators and produce 21,400 semi-trailer loads of hay.

Water released onto the market would need to be offered in 100 Mega Litre lots, with the community expectation upheld, that this water is specifically for fodder production. But time is of the essence, as hay crops require water now.

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Also, Western Australia is experiencing an average or better grain season. This will allow grain to be provided within Australia by rail, to supplement feed stocks.

I believe Australians would look favourably on strong intervention to support drought affected farmers and rural communities. The good will and generosity of Australians continues to impress me.

The decision to release water now sits with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, and State Government Ministers in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, and South Australia.

Surely it's time for some creative action on drought.

-ENDS-

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