

Mr Barnaby Joyce

Minister for Agriculture

Federal member for New England

Dear Sir

I have been a farmer all my life [72 years old] and during that time have been through several droughts, even though I have always farmed in the so called "safe" areas.

One thing that always comes up in drought is the importance of feed for stock .

I have been watching the development of the drought in Queensland over the last year and recently watched "Landline" where you and many others kept scratching your heads trying to figure out what to do.

I gather there is a government arrangement in Canada where farmers are legally directed to close up areas of their farms to save feed in case of bad years.

To me this is really the only way any sort of control can be made over the bad years we all face in farming, particularly in areas like inland eastern Australia.

To give an example – if the government were to acquire say 25% [with a one off payment –fencing included] of all stations in Queensland [or wherever] and pay the owners at a realistic valuation for that area it would give those farmers some finance to reduce debt and to carry on and maybe improve infrastructure, but more importantly to allow areas now under major stress to recover and to create a large feed base for drought years. Some areas not so prone to dry years could create a base for adjustment for others not so fortunate when the dry years come. These closed off areas could be moved around with improvement to the general environment substantial. More so if the water supply were to be cut off to stop the feral animals breeding up in these areas.

If this arrangement could be put in place future drought relief payments would either not be required or alternatively reduced considerably.

All this may seem a little communistic [I am a liberal] but this drought is not the first or the last. The advocates of climate change may think this is all new but I have read "Kings in Grass Castles" by Mary Durack and it was soon after they [the Duracks and the Costello's] left for the Kimberlys in the late 1870's that a long drought struck in that very area where the drought now devastates.

It may take the sceptics some convincing to make such a development but it would certainly smooth out some of the booms and busts of Australia's' difficult climatic farming conditions.

If the squabbles over the Murray Darling Basin can be overcome so can this never ending recurring problem of drought relief.

Give it a go – you've got nothing to lose - if you can think up a better course of action I would be most interested.

Sincerely

Peter F Jarman