

ROBBIE KATTER

Member for Traeger



MEDIA RELEASE

August 23, 2019

FORGOTTEN GRAZIERS APPEAL FOR PREMIER'S HELP

Forgotten flood-affected farmers, flanked by Katter's Australian Party MPs, have today made a desperate last-ditch appeal to the Premier of Queensland to allow that they be activated for crucial Category C disaster relief funding.

State KAP Leader and Traeger MP Robbie Katter said generous government support had been offered to flood victims in most cases; but in what can only be described as the grossly negligent outcome of bureaucratic process, some of those hardest-hit had been ignored.

He said dozens of primary producers, based in the Charters Towers and Etheridge Shire Council areas, have been denied access to the \$75,000 Special Disaster Assistance Recovery Grants that were made available to most other shires following February's catastrophic North and North West flooding disaster.

Mr Katter's office, as well as the office of Federal KAP Leader and Kennedy MP Bob Katter, have fielded calls since late February from devastated primary producers and small business owners who, despite their great need, were told by authorities they didn't qualify for help because of where they lived.

"We need someone to show real leadership and barge through the bureaucracy for us on this," Mr Katter said.

"On behalf of these graziers we have tried to go about all the right channels, we have appealed to all levels of government but have hit bureaucracy and red tape every time.

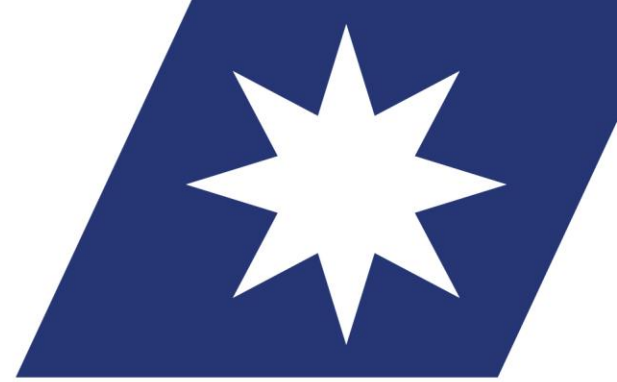
"On this issue so far, the Premier has wiped her hands of responsibility as numerous letters to her office haven't even been acknowledged, let alone responded to.

"The Premier only needs to use the ink in her pen to sign the Category C declaration to both Charters Towers Regional Council and Etheridge Shire Council, and then federal government will foot the bill.

"If these people are able to demonstrate their loss due to the event they should not be restricted because of their postcode.

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“They are still required to apply and will go through the same scrutiny as the other Category C-declared shires.

“We are not talking about a lot of money here, and there are probably only two or so dozen people in these regions who need the support.

“These are hard-working North Queenslanders who have exhausted their abilities and means to solve this issue on their own; they are staring down the barrel of a very bleak future without help.”

Background information:

Due to the Commonwealth Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) criteria, the devastated businesses in the Charters Towers and Etheridge Shire Council areas listed have been unable to apply for much-needed funding under the Category C assistance offered as part of the Special Disaster Assistance Recovery Grants of \$75,000.

Financial assistance is available from the Federal Government through the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA), but the Department of Home Affairs requires a signed declaration from the Queensland State Premier to open up the Category C disaster relief for Charters Towers Shire and Etheridge Shire on a case-by-case basis.

To achieve shire-wide Category C activation, there is a Commonwealth-set criteria of having more than 33 per cent of businesses in that local government area affected, however this criteria can be overruled by the Premier/the Federal Department of Home Affairs.

Further, this 33 per cent criteria is not realistic in the large local government areas of rural and regional Queensland that encompass huge geographic areas.

As the Premier well knows, this unprecedented and hugely-widespread flooding event was not confined to specific areas and the imposition of bureaucratic criteria in determining the need for help could have dire human consequences on the ground.

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