MEDIA RELEASE

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Queensland Senate team to spearhead drought fact-finding tour

Federal Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce has asked the man set to replace him in the Senate, Barry O’Sullivan, and Queensland Senator Ron Boswell to lead a fact-finding mission through drought impacted Queensland.

Having returned from his own tour through the dry conditions, Mr Joyce said he had written to Mr O’Sullivan – a Toowoomba-based grazier, businessman and former LNP Party Treasurer – and Senator Ron Boswell, requesting the men travel across the state to collect ‘on the ground’ information from impacted landholders and communities.

Mr Joyce said the listening tour would also contribute to the formulation of the Agriculture White Paper, which is due for release next year.

“With 60 per cent of Queensland in drought, it is vital the government is able to gather significant information from a range of graziers across all corners of the state to assist in ongoing policy development,” Mr Joyce said.

“I have said from the moment I was appointed Agriculture Minister that I was committed to ensuring graziers and farmers at a grassroots level are able to communicate with government and participate in the policy formulation process.”

“Government cannot control the weather, but we can do everything in our power to ensure we are listening to people on the ground who are struggling with the current tough conditions.”

“If we are to ensure there is effective rural policy, we need people in the senate who understand the regions.”

“Senator-Elect Matt Canavan is currently hard at work in the beef industry, ahead of his confirmation next year.”

“I look forward to working with Senator Boswell and Senator-elect O’Sullivan as this fact finding tour commences.”

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Barry O’Sullivan said he was already speaking with rural organisations and graziers across impacted regions. He said he planned to begin his fact-finding journey in the coming days.

“There is no bigger issue across rural Queensland at the moment than the drought,” Mr O’Sullivan said.

“I have been heavily involved in rural industry my whole life and I understand first-hand the devastating impact of drought.”

“Just as with all my official business while I was LNP treasurer, this fact-finding trip will be self-funded.”

“Barnaby has worked long hours since becoming minister, alongside his new department, to formulate policy that tackles this drought. I want this fact finding mission to provide valuable information to assist in short and long term drought policy formulation.”

Queensland Senator Ron Boswell has supported the need for MPs to talk to rural producers about the current drought.

“This is a critical situation. We need all hands and the cook out there talking to as many rural producers as possible to get their ideas and let them know the new Federal Government is listening to people in the bush,” Senator Boswell said.

“I welcome Barnaby Joyce’s call for our Queensland Senate team in particular to get out into the western and northern areas where the drought is worst, including Barry O’Sullivan, who I know is very worried about the impact weather conditions are having out there.

“It is easy to destroy things but far harder to put them back together again. That’s the case with the live cattle trade to Indonesia, which the Federal Labor Government wrecked so easily and which is still seriously impacting on cattle producers and communities throughout northern Australia.”

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