

5. MAYORAL MINUTE

5.1 Support to Farmers in the Macarthur Region

Recommendation

That Council notes the struggles faced by farmers across NSW, particularly those in the Macarthur region affected by the drought and recent bushfires, and extend our gratitude to all the firefighters, emergency services and volunteers who have fought the bushfires.

On Saturday night at the Campbelltown Christmas Carols I was proud to present a cheque for \$4500 on behalf of Council to the Dilly Drought Drive, a local charity supporting farmers in the Macarthur region.

This donation was made possible by our decision to cancel the fireworks display in light of the recent thick smoke haze and bushfire conditions affecting Campbelltown and the surrounding areas.

More than \$1000 was also raised by volunteers from the Dilly Drought Drive who collected money from the crowd on the night.

The state has experienced extended dry conditions since the start of 2017, winter rainfall was well below average and we just recorded the lowest November rainfall on record for Australia.

We have now entered level two water restrictions and the outlook for the coming summer months is likely to put further strain on water resources across our region and the state.

Water shortages have severely impacted the businesses of farmers across Australia and the extended dry has led to the ideal conditions for severe bushfires, including those that have recently impacted our neighbouring communities of Wollondilly and Camden and led to the thick smoke haze that has covered the region.

Many farmers in the Macarthur region have been left with dry dams and parched paddocks. They have been forced to truck hay in to feed their stock, adding significant costs to their business.

In the past few days many people in the Macarthur region, including employees here at Council, have seen their homes placed at risk by the Green Wattle Creek fire and have been forced to evacuate or have lost buildings on their property. The fire has so far burnt through more than 100,000 hectares and is still burning.

If it wasn't for the work of brave local firefighters the damage could be much worse and we're thankful for their tireless and continued efforts.

As the metropolitan centre of the Macarthur region, we have a responsibility to support our neighbours.

We are currently looking at a range of initiatives to help local groups that are supporting farmers and communities affected by the drought and bushfires. These include encouraging these organisations to utilise upcoming Council events to fundraise while also looking for opportunities to help promote these groups.

We are also exploring ways for Council to contribute directly through projects of our own. This includes a trial to bale grass in Bow Bowing Creek that we are currently conducting and if the quality is of a high enough standard could help farmers in our region.

I'd like to extend our gratitude to all the firefighters, emergency services and volunteers who have fought the bushfires. We truly appreciate their service.

Attachments

Nil