



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

BILLS

Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2011-2012

Consideration in Detail

SPEECH

Tuesday, 14 June 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Tuesday, 14 June 2011 Page 95 Questioner Speaker Mr SIDEBOTTOM</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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(Braddon) (NaN.NaN pm)

Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon) (17:42): I rise first and foremost to express my support to our government for its very strong commitment to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry portfolio. I know that that portfolio is very important to most members in this chamber at the moment and most especially in my electorate. Through my years as a member of the House agriculture committee and more recently as a member of the Standing Committee on Regional Australia—which I share with the member for Makin, who is here as well—I know that, although it is difficult to bring up at the moment because of the recent floods, one area of concern in rural and regional Australia is drought policy and reform. I must say that the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, who is in the chamber at the moment, was, along with the current minister, very instrumental in piloting and pioneering in this area.

I know that Minister Ludwig is continuing to progress the government's drought reform agenda that you, Minister, initiated through the pilot of the new drought measures in Western Australia, which was mentioned in your opening address on behalf of the current Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Well may we have had floods and driving rain most recently, but, as the Dorothea Mackellar poem says, this is also a country of great drought. We still experience drought in parts of this country. Our drought policy and exceptional circumstances assistance are absolutely vital to rural and regional communities. So, Minister, on behalf of Minister Ludwig, could you update us on how the extension of the WA drought pilot in the budget will improve on the existing pilot, which you made mention of in your earlier statements, and how the government will look to expand this going forward? Secondly, could you also advise in more detail how the government is continuing to assist those farmers—again, you mentioned this earlier—in the communities currently in drought? Those are very, very important questions about drought assistance. While I am on my feet, Minister, again on behalf of Minister Ludwig, would you give us an update on the agreed principles for forestry and for the forestry sector in Tasmania. As we well know, this is both a challenging and worrisome time in Tasmania, although there has been good news recently with the purchase of the Triabunna mill by a consortium in Hobart, and I notice that

Forestry Tasmania has given a very positive response to that. I know that you, Minister, as well as Minister Ludwig have played a significant role in hearing from representatives and advocates on the agreed principles. So I would be very interested in an update on that, thank you.