



Barnaby Joyce says he sent 'an awful lot' of special drought envoy reports to PM

ABC Rural By national rural reporter Kath Sullivan

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The Federal Government's former special drought envoy, Barnaby Joyce, says he sent "an awful lot" of reports to the Prime Minister about issues relating to drought-affected communities, during his appointment.

A letter from Drought Minister David Littleproud, tabled in the Parliament this week, said the Government could not comply with a request to release the drought envoy's report, because "no document exists".

The ABC approached Mr Joyce's office, seeking comment about the request to have the drought envoy's report tabled and it initially offered written responses, which failed to address whether or not the former Nationals leader had been required to write a report on his tenure.

Since publication, Mr Joyce contacted the ABC for an interview, and said he sent reports of the drought to the Prime Minister via text messages.

"I'm not going to tell you what they said, they were directed to the Prime Minister, if he wants to tell you what they said, that's up to him ... I can assure you, I directly sent reports," he said.

"If you say a report is a written segment to the Prime Minister ... then they definitely went to him, I definitely sent them, I sent them by SMS to him and they were read.

"To say that they were not sent or not compiled is incorrect."

Prior to Mr Joyce contacting the ABC, the Prime Minister's office said the former drought envoy had met with Mr Morrison "a number of times to discuss his findings", which were also presented to the Cabinet.

"As the special envoy for drought assistance and recovery, Mr Joyce was focused on getting into communities and talking to farmers in drought," a spokesperson said.

Mr Joyce said he had "an awful lot" of correspondence with Mr Morrison and his office when he was the drought envoy.

He said he raised five main concerns about the Government's response to drought.

"One would be, issues with Farm Household Allowance because it needs to be streamlined; stimulus to local economies, and that is why we came up with the Drought Communities Program; making sure people got access to a capacity to deal with droughts in the future, such as water infrastructure; and also large water infrastructure projects so that the economic basis of towns could be better secured and we're still fighting for that right now; ... and effective movement of fodder, especially that which has been donated," he said.

Joyce unclear if report was required

Prime Minister Scott Morrison appointed Mr Joyce the drought envoy days after he became the nation's leader.

The position ended after May's federal election.

Sources have said he was not required to produce a report from his tenure.

Mr Joyce told the ABC he was unclear if he was required to produce a report.

"I would have to look at my letter of engagement, but regardless of what it says, I provided reports so whether it did or it didn't, I provided reports," he said.

"If it said please don't, I probably disobeyed it, because I did."

Earlier in the week, the Government responded to a Senate demand for documents relating to Mr Joyce and drought coordinator Major General Stephen Day's tenure.

In his letter to the Senate, Mr Littleproud said he was unable to release Major General Day's report because it was confidential and "subject to the deliberations of Cabinet".

"The request for the former special envoy for drought assistance and recovery's report cannot be complied with as he did not prepare a final report and as such, no document exists," Mr Littleproud wrote.

Mr Joyce said he had not seen the letter, written by Mr Littleproud, tabled in the Parliament.

"I've got no idea what's tabled in the Parliament because I am no longer the drought envoy," he said.

Topics: drought, disasters-and-accidents, federal-parliament, parliament, federal-government, government-and-politics, joyce-barnaby, person, australia, longreach-4730, dubbo-2830, sale-3850, ensay-3895, orbost-3888, australia, vic, nsw, bedourie-4829, windorah-4481, st-george-4487, hughenden-4821, winton-4735, boullia-4829, mount-isa-4825, barcaldine-4725, quilpie-4480, blackall-4472, cunnamulla-4490, charleville-4470, goulburn-2580, wollongong-2500, moree-2400, gunnedah-2380, griffith-2680, walgett-2832, bourke-2840, wagga-wagga-2650, muswellbrook-2333, orange-2800, tamworth-2340, broken-hill-2880, peterborough-5422, pinnaroo-5304, darke-peak-5642, yunta-5440, elliston-5670, streaky-bay-5680, kimba-5641, orroroo-5431, kadina-5554, whyalla-5600, marree-5733, cleve-5640, port-pirie-5540