



The Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP

Minister for Primary Industries

Minister for Small Business

MEDIA STATEMENT

Monday 17 February 2014

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT TOUR OF DROUGHT-AFFECTED REGIONS WELCOMED

NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson, has welcomed a tour of drought-affected regions in NSW by Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Commonwealth Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce.

“This visit, to Broken Hill today and Bourke yesterday, sends an incredibly strong message of support that the Commonwealth Government recognises the difficulties many of our primary producers are facing,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

“Agriculture is one of the pillars of the Australian economy and it is essential that the Commonwealth Government supports our primary producers during extended periods of drought, which are more in line with a natural disaster.

“Many primary producers in the drought-affected parts of NSW have undertaken extensive preparedness measures to endure these adverse seasonal conditions, however, have simply not had enough time to prepare following the end of the Millennium drought.

“I was pleased to see welcome rainfall during the past week across many parts of NSW, but there are still a large number of regions feeling the impacts of this drought.

“While farmers must make sound management decisions and implement extensive preparedness measures to manage seasonal conditions, no matter how well a farmer or land manager may prepare, it is impossible to completely drought-proof a property.

“In November 2013 the NSW Government put in place a \$7.6 million package of emergency assistance measures for the Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett local government areas and last week I announced that this package will increase to \$14.6 million and be expanded to an additional 20 LGAs and the far western Unincorporated Area.

“The Regional Assistance Advisory Committee is continuing to closely monitor seasonal conditions in other parts of NSW – utilising both objective data on soil moisture, rainfall and pasture growth as well as on-ground assessments – and will provide further advice and recommendations to the NSW Government as required.

“The NSW Government warmly welcomes this visit to Bourke and Broken Hill and I look forward to seeing detail of the Commonwealth’s proposed assistance measures.”