



Andrew Stoner MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Trade and Investment
Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services

Katrina Hodgkinson MP
Minister for Primary Industries
Minister for Small Business

MEDIA RELEASE

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EMERGENCY DROUGHT ASSISTANCE PACKAGE EXPANDED

Deputy Premier Andrew Stoner and Minister for Primary Industries Katrina Hodgkinson today announced additional assistance measures for drought-stricken farmers in NSW.

The measures include the expansion of a temporary package of emergency in-drought support measures to an additional 20 local government areas (LGAs) and the far west Unincorporated Area in NSW.

In November 2013 the NSW Government announced a **\$7.6 million** emergency assistance package for the Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett LGAs and today's announcement increases the amount allocated to the support package to **\$14.6 million**.

The temporary emergency assistance package will be expanded to include the LGAs of: Armidale; Bogan; Central Darling; Cobar; Coonamble; Gilgandra; Glen Innes; Gunnedah; Guyra; Gwydir; Inverell; Moree Plains; Narrabri; Tamworth Regional; Tenterfield; Uralla; Walcha; Warren; and Warrumbungle, as well as Broken Hill and the far west Unincorporated Area.

Ms Hodgkinson and Mr Stoner said the measures, which are back-dated to 1 January 2014 for all the LGAs – with the exception of the Transport Assistance Reimbursement for Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett LGAs which is back-dated to 1 July 2013, include:

- **up to \$20,000** per producer in the form of a **Transport Assistance Reimbursement**;
- **up to \$30,000** per producer for **Emergency Water Infrastructure Grants**; and
- the waiving of **Western Lands Lease payments, Local Land Services rates** and **Wild Dog Destruction Board rates** for a 12-month period, where applicable.

Mr Stoner said the NSW Government's temporary measures are funded through to 30 June 2014, and called on the Commonwealth Government to urgently release details of its proposed assistance package.

"The NSW Liberal & Nationals Government has taken the extra steps to ensure drought-affected communities and primary producers receive vital support," Mr Stoner said.

"While the NSW Government has expanded its assistance measures, there is a clear need for the Commonwealth to now put forward a comprehensive package to assist primary producers to respond to this drought.

“Despite our landholders being drought-prepared and on the front foot when it comes to maximising their properties’ water storage, this extreme weather has delivered a real blow to their way of life.

“This comprehensive package will ensure these landholders and communities are assisted now while they deal with this crisis.”

The expanded emergency assistance measures are in addition to assistance the NSW Government has made available to all landholders in NSW, which includes:

- **Transport Subsidies for Animal Welfare**, focused on stock going to sale or slaughter where there is significant risk to animal welfare, which will remain while drought conditions persist; and
- previously increasing funding to the **Rural Support Worker Program**.

Ms Hodgkinson, who is this week touring drought-affected communities in northern NSW, made the announcement in Tamworth with the Member for Tamworth, Kevin Anderson, and the Member for Northern Tablelands, Adam Marshall.

“Seasonal conditions are deteriorating at a rapid rate across a large portion of NSW and I am concerned at the severity and speed at which this drought is moving across the landscape,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

“Farmers are in some cases being forced to drastically reduce stock numbers, have been carting in feed and water for some time and have been forced to offload livestock at reduced prices to saleyards and abattoirs, which are reporting extremely high levels of throughput.

“While the NSW Government recognises that producers must make sound management decisions and implement extensive preparedness measures to deal with adverse seasonal conditions, no matter how well a farmer may prepare for drought, it is impossible to completely drought-proof a property.”

Mr Marshall welcomed the extension of emergency assistance measures.

“Primary producers in the Northern Tablelands region are world class and have prepared as well as they could for this drought, but as it has moved beyond any reasonable level of preparedness, I know many will welcome this assistance package,” he said.

Mr Anderson said the emergency drought assistance measures include funding to appoint a Rural Support Worker based in Tamworth, with recruitment to begin immediately.

“This new position will work with farm families and rural communities across the New England, Upper Hunter and Northern Tablelands – using Tamworth as a base – and I look forward to someone being appointed as soon as possible,” he said.

The Regional Assistance Advisory Committee and Local Land Services will continue to monitor seasonal conditions across NSW and will provide advice and recommendations to the NSW Government as required.

For more information, visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/emergency/drought/managing

**MEDIA: Ben Shine 0431 096 596 (Deputy Premier)
Julian Luke 0427 561 592 (Minister Hodgkinson)**