



MEDIA RELEASE

Drought package benefits New England Electorate and North West

11 May 2015

FEDERAL Member for New England, Barnaby Joyce said rural communities in the New England and North West suffering through extreme drought will be eligible for Commonwealth assistance as part of a new \$333 million support package.

Mr Joyce said the Commonwealth Government investment is an acknowledgment of the difficulties being experienced by farmers and by the communities they help to sustain.

He said drilling down into the detail of the package revealed that community health and pest control was still a vital part of the Government's support in the regions. For example the Local Land Services region of Northern Tablelands will receive \$350,396 for wild dogs, feral pigs and rabbits while in the North west there will be \$388,071 for wild dogs and feral pigs.

Social Services funding will continue in the following shires in the New England Electorate including, Armidale Dumaresq, Glen Innes Severn, Gunnedah, Guyra, Inverell, Tamworth Regional Council, Tenterfield, Uralla and Walcha.

In the neighbouring Parkes Electorate, local governments to benefit from Social Services funding include Bogan, Bourke, Brewarrina, Broken Hill, Central Darling, Cobar, Coonamble, Gilgandra, Gwydir, Moree Plains, Narrabri, Unincorporated NSW, Walgett, Warren and the Warrumbungle Shire.

Drought coordinators currently placed in Armidale and Tamworth will also continue, Mr Joyce said.

"It is critical these communities remain viable and that people stay in jobs so that they can take advantage of better conditions when the drought breaks.

"Helping farmers through times of drought is in our national interest. Despite unprecedented drought conditions in some parts of the country and a third failed wet season in large parts of the north, Australia's agriculture sector will contribute an estimated \$52 billion to the economy this financial year," he said.

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Hon **Barnaby Joyce** MP

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR NEW ENGLAND

In recognition of the drought's effects on farming businesses and regional communities, the Commonwealth Government will provide:

\$35 million for shovel-ready, local infrastructure and employment projects. Funding will be targeted at projects that offer the greatest potential to stimulate local spending, use local resources and provide lasting benefits to the community.

\$25.8 million for programmes to manage pest animals and weeds in drought-affected areas. This measure will provide work for rural contractors while assisting landowners to deal with the impact of feral animals on livestock and pasture.

\$20 million to expand existing social and community support programmes. This additional funding will improve access to mental health support and counselling services for drought-affected families and communities.

\$1.8 million to fund additional rural financial counsellors in drought-affected areas.

\$250 million in 2015–16 to continue access to existing drought specific concessional loans schemes.

Mr Joyce said these measures build upon existing Commonwealth support to farmers experiencing hardship, such the Farm Household Allowance, which is currently flowing to over 4,800 farmers or their partners.

“Over the past two years the Commonwealth has provided around \$190 million to support drought-stricken farmers and approved \$270 million in concessional loans to 531 farm businesses.”

Mr Joyce said further measures to support farmers who are preparing themselves for the damaging effects of drought will be announced in the forthcoming Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper.

For information on the new drought support measures go to www.agriculture.gov.au/dro?ught

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