



## DROUGHT AND BUSHFIRE ASSISTANCE BRIEF – December 2019

This brief is provided as a guide for key contacts and current available assistance programs and support services for dairy regions severely affected by current drought and bushfire conditions in Northern NSW regions.

Existing assistance measures are mainly focussed around existing drought declarations in NSW shires. For the latest drought declaration map and declaration dates please visit <https://edis.dpi.nsw.gov.au/>

The dairy industry has initiated an industry response and updates will be provided to advise of additional activities to assist dairy farmers managing the effects of the current dry conditions.

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### Available assistance to date

#### Taking Stock one-on-one consultations

Given the current seasonal conditions, all dairy farmers in Queensland and northern NSW can now access free one-on-one advice from experienced advisers through Dairy Australia's Taking Stock program. The sessions take place on farm and are private, confidential and personalised to address your individual situation and help you map out a plan ahead. Taking Stock aims to address the specific needs of farmers, including any physical, financial and people issues that are identified.

Sessions could include:

- Feed options, planning and budgeting
- Managing a fodder shortage
- Diet formulation and herd nutrition analysis
- Herd decisions and animal health
- Cash budgeting
- Managing your farm team during tough times
- Meeting the bank

Benefits of the program include a fully funded three to four hour consultation on your farm with an experienced consultant, an action plan tailored to your farm with your next steps identified, a follow up Taking Stock consultation to review and update your action plan and the opportunity to assess your current situation, discuss your options and work out your key decisions.

If you would like to arrange a consultation, then please call your local extension co-ordinator or Brad Granzin on 0431 197 479 or [brad@subtropicaldairy.com.au](mailto:brad@subtropicaldairy.com.au)

#### Bushfire Support

In an emergency, always call 000. The below is a list of other resources available for farmers impacted by the fires

- SES – call 132 500
- Emergency fodder and water is being coordinated by NSW DPI and Local Land Services via the Agriculture and Animal Services Hotline
  - Call 1800 814 647 to register your request

- NSW DPI bushfires website - [dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/bushfires](https://dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/bushfires) – includes links to current situation and forecasts
- Bushfire information line – 1800 679 737
- NSW Rural Fire Service - [rfs.nsw.gov.au/news-and-media/stay-up-to-date](https://rfs.nsw.gov.au/news-and-media/stay-up-to-date)
  - Includes links to the Fires Near me website and app you can download
- Blaze aid is a volunteer-based organisation that works with families and individuals in rural Australia after natural disasters such as fires and floods. To register for fencing assistance on farm visit their website for more information [blazeaid.com.au/how-to-get-fencing-help/](https://blazeaid.com.au/how-to-get-fencing-help/)

## NSW Drought Funding and Support

### NSW Government – Drought relief package – DroughtHub – 02 6881 1290

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/drougthub/drought-assistance>

NSW DroughtHub – a one-stop online destination for information on a range of services and support available to primary producers and their families for managing drought.

Producers with a property that is currently drought affected may be eligible for

- **Animal Welfare Transport Subsidy**  
A subsidy of 50% of eligible costs for the permanent transport of stock off a farm which is facing financial hardship and where dairy livestock are at a fat score of 3 or below, to a maximum of \$20,000 per financial year. Visit the Rural Assistance Authority website to apply or check eligibility or call 1800 678 593  
<https://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/grants/transport-subsidy>
- **Donated Fodder Transport**  
The NSW Government is covering the cost of transporting donated fodder when transport providers are acting in conjunction with community groups and taking fodder from within NSW to drought-affected properties. 100% of the costs will be covered up to a maximum of \$5 per KM and up to 1500KM. More information is available from the Rural Assistance Authority  
<https://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/grants/transport-subsidy>
- **Drought Transport Subsidy**  
Freight subsidies for transporting fodder, water to a property for stock or domestic use, stock to and from agistment, and stock to sale or slaughter. For journeys completed between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020, eligible farmers can claim up to \$40,000 per farm business. The subsidy covers up to 50% of the full cost of freight with a cap of \$5 per kilometre (plus GST). There is no cap on kilometres per journey for tax invoices paid between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020.  
If farmers did not submit a claim for the 2018-19 financial year, they may do so in this financial year. The total cap remains in place.  
For information on FAQ's, application forms and eligibility follow this link:  
<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/drougthub/drought-assistance>
- **Farm Business Skills Professional Development Program**  
The NSW Government will subsidise up to 50% of eligible costs for an approved course or activity, with a maximum reimbursement of \$5,000 per farmer and \$9,000 per farm business. Three priority areas have been identified including risk management, financial and business management and farm business planning/drought preparedness.  
For all the details please follow this link:  
<https://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/education-and-training>
- **On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate**  
The Australian and NSW Governments are offering a rebate to drought affected farmers who invest in urgently-needed on-farm water infrastructure that addresses animal welfare needs and improves resilience to drought. Farmers will be able to access a 25% rebate on new purchases and installation costs of water infrastructure projects on-farm across NSW to help them in the current drought and be

better prepared for future dry conditions. The On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate scheme can be applied to new purchases and installation of pipes, water storages and water pumps, de-silting dams, and associated power supplies such as generators. Farmers will be eligible to apply through the NSW government for the rebates which will also cover eligible work undertaken since 1 July 2018. More information is available here: <https://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/grants/emergency-water-infrastructure-rebate-scheme>

- **Registration Savings**  
Primary producers in NSW will receive additional savings on heavy vehicle registration costs through to June 2020. The reduced costs are automatically applied when you make your registration payment. Compulsory Third Party (CTP) Insurance, stamp duty, number plate fees and relevant safety checks are all still applicable and must be paid. More information is available here: <https://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/business-industry/heavy-vehicles/registration/drought-relief/pp-hv-refunds-rebates/savings.html>
- **Farm Innovation Fund Interest Charges**  
Existing Farm Innovation Fund customers, and all applicants who submitted on or before 30 June 2020 will have interest charges for 2018/19 and 2019/20 financial years refunded and waived. This will be automatically applied. For more information please contact the Rural Assistance Authority on 1800 678 593
- **NSW Local Land Services Rates**  
The NSW Government are waiving all Local Land Service rates for 2019 and 2020, including general rates and rates for animal health and pests, the meat industry levy and costs for routine stock moving permit and stock identification. You do not need to apply for this waiver as it will be automatically applied to landholders. More information is available here: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/droughthub/drought-assistance/faq#wavers>
- **Water Licences**  
The NSW Government is providing financial assistance of up to \$4000 to all general water security licence holders (and supplementary water access licence holders) in rural and regional NSW across surface and groundwater systems, and to customers of Irrigation Corporation. You do not need to apply for this waiver as it will be automatically applied to landholders on their next bill.

WaterNSW is administering the waiver on fixed charges on behalf of the NSW Government, and has already waived fees for 2017/18. The waiver will also be applied to fixed charges on general security water licences for 2019/20. You can read more information here:

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/droughthub/drought-assistance/faq#wavers>

### **Rural Assistance Authority – Ph 1800 678 593**

<https://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/>

Free and impartial financial counselling to eligible primary producers who are suffering financial hardship. Find a Rural Financial Counsellor here: <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/assistance/rural-financial-counselling-service/nsw>

## **Federal Funding and Support**

### **Drought Community Support Initiative (DCSI)**

An Australian Government funded project that provides a one-off payment to farmers, farm workers and farm suppliers/contractors affected by the drought and living in an eligible Local Government Area (LGA). If you're a farmer, farm worker or farm supplier/contractor who is struggling financially because of the drought, you may be entitled to receive a one-off payment of up to \$3,000 funded by the Australian Government's Drought Community Support Initiative Round 2 (DCSI). Apply for funding through the

Salvation Army here - <https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/need-help/disaster-relief-and-support/drought-community-support-initiative/>

Or St Vincent De Paul here – [https://www.vinnies.org.au/page/Find\\_Help/drought\\_assistance/](https://www.vinnies.org.au/page/Find_Help/drought_assistance/)

Both websites have links to the current eligible LGA's available

### **FarmHub website**

<https://farmhub.org.au/>

FarmHub connects Australian farmers with services and support during tough times, such as drought. You can access support by State or Category or visit their Knowledge Centre for more information.

### **Financial Hardships Tax Provisions**

<https://www.ato.gov.au/general/financial-difficulties-and-serious-hardship/in-detail/help-for-drought-affected-taxpayers/>

The Australian Tax Office has a range of options that they may be able to help with including

- More time to pay
- Waiving penalties or interest charged at a time you were affected by drought
- Payment plans with interest free periods
- Adjusting pay as you go (PAYG) instalments to better suit your circumstances
- Tax incentives for primary producers

\*they encourage you to lodge all activity statements and tax returns by the due date even if you can't pay  
Remember – payments to assist your business affected by drought are assessable income even if received from private funds, charitable groups or crowdfunding platforms.

### **Drought Loans – Regional Investment Corporation - 1800 875 675**

<https://www.ric.gov.au>

Drought Loans are available to help farm businesses recover from and prepare for future droughts and to return to viability in the long term. These loans are funded by the Australian Government and delivered by the Regional Investment Corporation.

### **Farm Household Allowance (FHA) – 13 23 16**

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/farm-household-allowance>

An Australian Government support package that's available to eligible farmers and their partners experiencing hardship (including drought) for up to four cumulative years (1,460 days). FHA gives farmers breathing space to implement plans and seek training to become financially self-sufficient, so they are better placed to sustain their farming businesses. For more information call 132 316 or visit <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/assistance/farm-household-allowance>

## **Other Funding and Support**

### **Ergon Energy – relief from electricity supply charges**

If you are an Ergon Energy customer seeking relief from electricity supply charges, contact 13 10 46.

<https://www.ergon.com.au/retail/residential/support-programs/drought-relief>

### **Financial and emotional support services**

Drought places financial & emotional stress on affected communities. If you or someone you know is experiencing financial stress or mental health & wellbeing issues, support is available from professional financial counselors and/or mental health services.

These schemes are designed to help people in rural and remote communities deal with the impact of stressful situations such as drought.

The Rural Financial Counselling Service provides free financial advice to producers who are suffering financial hardship and have no alternative sources of impartial financial information. The service is funded by grants from government to local organisations that employ financial counsellors.

[www.rfcsnsw-northernregion.org](http://www.rfcsnsw-northernregion.org)

Location	Phone	Email/Website
Head office – Casino	Phone: 02 6662 5055	<a href="mailto:Gary.goldberg@rfcsnr.org.au">Gary.goldberg@rfcsnr.org.au</a> Website: <a href="http://www.rfcsnr.org.au">www.rfcsnr.org.au</a>
Casino – Steve Sibley	Ph: 02 6662 8602 Mob: 0429 626 191	<a href="mailto:steve.sibley@rfcsnr.org.au">steve.sibley@rfcsnr.org.au</a>
Casino – Ross Turvey	Ph: 02 6662 6191 Mob: 0458 222 216	<a href="mailto:ross.turvey@rfcsnr.org.au">ross.turvey@rfcsnr.org.au</a>
Macksville – Terry Pearce	02 6568 3888	<a href="mailto:macksville@rfcsnr.org.au">macksville@rfcsnr.org.au</a>
Glen Innes – Stuart Brummell	02 6732 3325 0448 035 152	<a href="mailto:Stuart.brummell@rfcsnr.org.au">Stuart.brummell@rfcsnr.org.au</a>
Armidale – Debby Maddox	02 6778 4784	<a href="mailto:armidale@rfcsnr.org.au">armidale@rfcsnr.org.au</a>
Coffs Harbour (Rural Resilience Officer) – Jen Haberecht	Mob: 0400 160 287	<a href="mailto:Jen.haberecht@dpi.nsw.gov.au">Jen.haberecht@dpi.nsw.gov.au</a>

### **Business Connect – Support for Farm and Non-Farm Businesses**

Business Connect provides tailored, trusted advice for your small farm or non-farm business. Call 1300 134 359 to connect with your local Business Connect advisor. Business Connect advisors are experienced and accredited professionals who provide confidential advice independently from the NSW Government. Advisors can advise on a range of business matters such as business planning, looking at opportunities to diversify, marketing, digital marketing and HR. For more information click this link:

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/droughthub/drought-assistance/faq#services>

### **Farm Debt Mediation**

The NSW Government service offering farm debt mediation service to provide a structured negotiation process where an accredited, independent mediator helps the farmer and their creditors to negotiate and reach agreements about farm business debt. Visit the webpage for more information and links to accredited mediators in your area. <https://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/fdm>

### **Revenue NSW**

Revenue NSW is offering assistance to any individuals and businesses affected by the drought, including farmers receiving government drought relief assistance. Anyone experiencing difficulties meeting obligations is invited to contact the relevant business area at Revenue NSW to discuss their individual circumstances and which assistance measures are available. <https://www.revenue.nsw.gov.au/contact>

### **Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP)**

The NSW Government is funding the state-wide RAMHP program to help link people in regional and remote areas of NSW with mental health support. Visit RAMHP for more information on services, training and the location of a counsellor near you. <http://www.ramhp.com.au/about-us/> Ph 02 6363 8444

### **Local mental health services and organisations**

- Community Mental Health Line – Ph 1800 011 511
- Mensline Australia – Ph 1300 789 978
- Beyondblue – Ph 1300 224 636
- Lifeline – Ph 131 114

- Australian Red Cross - Ph 1800 660 066
- Black Dog Institute – Ph 02 9382 4530

#### **Other support services**

- Rural Aid – Ph 1300 327 624  
<https://www.ruralaid.org.au/farmers/>
- Salvos –Ph 02 8757 8088  
<https://salvos.org.au/about-us/latest-news/disasters-other-appeals/supporting-farmers-and-communities-affected-by-drought/>
- Aussie Helpers – PH 1300 665 232 or [admin@aussiehelpers.org.au](mailto:admin@aussiehelpers.org.au)
- Foodbank NSW - PH 02 9756 3099 or [office@foodbanknsw.org.au](mailto:office@foodbanknsw.org.au)
- Vinnies – PH 02 9568 0262
- Drought Angels – Ph 0409 548 414 or 0447 129 681 – [droughtangels@gmail.com](mailto:droughtangels@gmail.com)
- Lions Need for Feed –Ph 0459 444 111 – [lionsneedforfeed@yahoo.com.au](mailto:lionsneedforfeed@yahoo.com.au)
- Red Cross – 1800 733 276
- CWA OF NSW – 02 8337 0200