



# JOINT PRESS RELEASE

**THE HON. TONY ABBOTT MP, PRIME MINISTER  
THE HON. BARNABY JOYCE, MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE**

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## **SUPPORTING DROUGHT AFFECTED FARMERS**

Australian farmers suffering through the crippling drought will be able to access greater government assistance sooner as part of a \$320 million comprehensive drought support package.

The Government will bring forward more generous income support arrangements for farmers and their families; extend concessional loans to eligible drought affected farm businesses; provide funds for water infrastructure and pest eradication; as well as funds for counselling support services for farmers.

Farming is a very significant part of our economy and will play a critical role in our economic future. This is a government determined to stand by the people of Australia in good times and bad.

As part of the package:

- More generous criteria for accessing income support will be made available to farmers from 3 March 2014 instead of 1 July 2014.
- Drought Concessional Loans totalling \$280 million will be allocated to give eligible farm businesses the resources to recover from the effects of drought.
- To assist drought affected farms to access water, \$12 million will be added to existing emergency water infrastructure schemes, including supplementing those in NSW and Queensland.
- \$10 million in assistance will be available for pest management in drought affected areas.
- \$10.7 million will help increase access to social and mental health services in communities affected by this drought.

Farm businesses and farm families across Australia are suffering financially and emotionally as a result of the prolonged drought.

This drought assistance package is to support farm businesses, families and communities that are experiencing hardship and to help them recover when the current drought ends.

26 February 2014



February  
2014

# Drought support for farmers



**The Australian Government supports farm families and farm businesses in managing and recovering from periods of hardship, including drought, and assists them in preparedness and future planning.**

**On 26 February 2014 the Prime Minister, the Hon. Tony Abbott MP, and the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP, announced a package of measures offering financial, social and mental health support to farming families, farm businesses and rural communities suffering from drought.**

Measures include:

## **Interim Farm Household Allowance (Interim FHA)**

Interim FHA will help farm families with their daily living expenses and is available to eligible farmers Australia-wide, without the need for a drought declaration.

Like the Transitional Farm Family Payment, the Interim FHA will be paid at a fortnightly rate equivalent to Newstart Allowance. However, the interim payment will have a different asset test so that more farmers, including those affected by drought, will be able to access income support when they need it.

Payments under the Interim FHA commence from 3 March 2014 for new applicants.

Existing Transitional Farm Family Payment recipients as at 28 February 2014 will be automatically transferred to Interim FHA so they don't have a break in payment.

The Interim FHA will be available until the permanent Farm Household Allowance (FHA) is implemented on 1 July 2014.

To avoid a break in payment, recipients of the Interim FHA who wish to claim FHA will be eligible to receive payment until 30 September 2014 or until their application for FHA has been finalised, whichever is earlier.

**Phone:** 13 23 16  
(Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm EST)

**Web:** [humanservices.gov.au/rural](http://humanservices.gov.au/rural)

## **Drought Concessional Loans Scheme**

The Australian Government is offering up to \$280 million in concessional loans to eligible drought-affected farm businesses for debt restructuring, operating expenses and drought recovery activities. Drought concessional loans will help farm businesses recover from the effects of drought and return to profitability in the long term. Loans of up to \$1 million, or 50 per cent of the farm business's debt, whichever is lower, will be available.

The Australian Government will work with the jurisdictions as a priority to finalise application requirements and delivery arrangements for the scheme. More information on the roll-out of the scheme will be available shortly.

**Web:** [daff.gov.au/assistance](http://daff.gov.au/assistance)

## **Additional funding for water-related infrastructure rebates**

Drought-affected farmers in Queensland and New South Wales will benefit from additional funding for water-related infrastructure rebates. There is scope to extend this assistance to other areas if needed.

**Queensland:** [daff.qld.gov.au/environment/drought/assistance/new-drought-assistance-package](http://daff.qld.gov.au/environment/drought/assistance/new-drought-assistance-package)

**New South Wales:** [raa.nsw.gov.au/assistance/emergency-water-infrastructure-rebate](http://raa.nsw.gov.au/assistance/emergency-water-infrastructure-rebate)



### Social Support

Recognising that hardships like drought can have significant impacts on the mental health and wellbeing of farmers, farm families and communities, the Australian Government is providing up to \$10.7 million to increase the delivery of social support services in drought-affected areas.

**Phone:** 1300 653 227

**Web:** [dss.gov.au/familysupportprogram](https://dss.gov.au/familysupportprogram) and [dss.gov.au/targetedcommunitycare](https://dss.gov.au/targetedcommunitycare)

### Assistance for farm businesses to manage pest impacts in drought-affected areas

The Australian Government will contribute \$10 million, primarily in Queensland and New South Wales, to help reduce the impacts of wild dogs and other pest animals and manage total grazing pressure in drought affected regions. This will be delivered through local natural resource management organisations.

**Web:** [daff.gov.au/assistance](https://daff.gov.au/assistance)

