



Gladys Berejiklian

Premier of NSW

John Barilaro

Deputy Premier

Niall Blair

Minister for Primary Industries

MEDIA RELEASE

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MORE THAN \$1 BILLION IN SUPPORT TO HELP FARMERS THROUGH WORSENING DROUGHT

With 99 per cent of the State now in drought the NSW Government has today announced further support with a \$500 million Emergency Drought Relief Package, taking the NSW Liberals & Nationals total drought support to more than \$1 billion.

Premier Gladys Berejiklian said farmers are facing one of the driest winters on record, resulting in failing crops, drastic water shortages and a diminishing supply of fodder to sustain livestock.

“We have listened to farmers throughout NSW who have told me they urgently need help,” Ms Berejiklian said.

“To date we have already committed \$584 million in drought support, most of which is focused on preparation for drought conditions.

“However, conditions are now so dire that further support is needed to address the more immediate needs for farmers and their communities until the drought breaks.”

The major feature of the Emergency Relief Package is approximately \$190 million for the introduction of Drought Transport Subsidies.

The subsidies will be able to cover up to 50 per cent of the full cost of transporting fodder, water for stock and livestock to pasture, slaughter or sale. The NSW Government will offer a transport subsidy of up to \$20,000 per farm business.

The relief measure will also be back-dated so farmers can access additional subsidies for freight expenses incurred since January 1, 2018.

Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional NSW John Barilaro said this drought has quickly worsened across the state because June and July were drier than expected, and farmers have been forced to source fodder from interstate as local supply has deteriorated.

“We said we would constantly reassess the conditions and relief measures, and the fact we’ve now increased our drought-relief package to over \$1 billion is a reflection of how serious this drought is, and how much we value the health and wellbeing of our farming and regional communities,” Mr Barilaro said.

“Importantly, we have backdated this relief measure to the start of the year when the drought intensified, especially in the Upper Hunter and Western NSW. This means

eligible farmers who made the decision to destock earlier this year will still benefit from this new relief package.”

Minister for Primary Industries Niall Blair reiterated his commitment to standing side by side with farmers during the worsening drought.

“As part of the emergency funding I am pleased to announce waivers on Local Land Services annual rates, fixed charges on water licences, registration costs for class one agricultural vehicles, and interest on existing Farm Innovation Fund loans,” Mr Blair said.

“We know many families are also having to bring in water for domestic use, which is why we have also set aside additional funding for this essential service.

“The package we have has to be fair, it has to be equitable and it has to be able to be adapted to all types of farming businesses right across NSW.”

Member for Bathurst Paul Toole welcomed the Government's Emergency Relief Package.

"I know farming families across my electorate and beyond have been struggling with deteriorating conditions. This package shows more support for farming families to help them get through this difficult time," Mr Toole said.

"The transport subsidy in particular will be welcomed by farming families throughout the Central West."

The three major elements of the \$500 million Emergency Drought Relief Package are:

- Approximately \$190 million for Drought Transport Subsidies
- Approximately \$100 million for cutting the cost of farming fees and charges – by waiving Local Land Services rates, waiving fixed water charges in rural and regional areas, and waiving class one agricultural vehicle registration costs, among other initiatives, and
- \$150 million to bolster the Farm Innovation Fund (FIF) infrastructure program;

The package also includes funding for:

- Counselling and mental health;
- Critical services in regional communities including transporting water and drought related road upgrades and repairs;
- Animal welfare and stock disposal.

The NSW Rural Assistance Authority will begin processing applications from Monday August 6. For more information on the NSW Government's emergency drought relief package visit www.droughthub.nsw.gov.au

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