



parliamentary update



November Edition (11/08)

Dear Member of Parliament,

It is with pleasure that the NSW Farmers' Association (the 'Association') forwards to you this edition of the Parliamentary Update Newsletter.

The Association has welcomed the Commonwealth's announcement to extend drought assistance to parts of northern NSW until 30 April 2009. The extension includes farmers and communities which were left out in the September 2008 rollover of Exceptional Circumstances assistance.

With regard to the NSW Mini-Budget, the Association has raised concerns with the NSW Government about the impact the Mini-Budget will have on rural and regional NSW. The suspension of branch grain lines, the closing of Ag Research Stations and the proposed selling of the farm land at the Hurlstone Agricultural High School will all have an impact on agriculture into the future, not to mention the axing of the back-to-school payment and changes to the School Student Transport Scheme. The Mini-Budget comes on the heels of the longest drought on record and it will increase pressure on already overstressed rural communities and farming enterprises. The Association accepts that the Government needed to pare back its budget spending to maintain the AAA rating but it will be up to the Government to illustrate how services will be maintained in regional and rural NSW.

I hope that you are able to attend the Association's annual 2008 Christmas Drinks on Tuesday, 2 December 2008, hosted by the President, Jock Laurie and the Board of the Association. Your invite has been posted to your electorate address.

Until next time,

Shaughn Morgan
Chief Executive

Oysters in the House

On Thursday, 13 November 2008, the third (3rd) annual Oysters in the House was held at Customs House in Sydney. Oysters in the House is the Oyster industries premier Oyster marketing event where Oysters are matched up with regional wineries and restaurants from all over NSW. The event is a great success with city folk and this year's event was no exception with a large number of people from the general public, industry and Government in attendance. The presenter for the day was Simon Marnie from ABC radio, who both entertained the audience whilst educating them on the finer details of Oyster appreciation and selection. A feature of the event was the people's choice award where attendees were presented with a tray of 6 Sydney Rock Oysters from different NSW Oyster producing estuaries and they were asked to select their favourite Oysters based on appearance and taste. This year's people's choice award winning Oyster went to the Hastings River Oysters entry from Port Macquarie and second place was awarded to Graham Barclay Oysters of Forster.

Central north-North West Exceptional Circumstance Area announcement

The Federal Government announced on Thursday, 13 November 2008, that drought assistance would be extended for parts of northern NSW around Coonabarabran and the Northern Slopes until 30 April 2009. The Central North North-West Coonabarabran Revision incorporates the Coonabarabran Rural Lands Protection Board (RLPB) district in its entirety. The extension is classified as a continuation of funding, and therefore anyone receiving assistance either in the form of Interest Rate Subsidies or Household Income Support prior to 30 September 2008 will be able to continue receiving this assistance and have payments backdated to 1 October.

UPDATE

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ISDN Internet Services to Cease - 31 December 2008

The Association is continuing to work to ensure that rural communities are not disadvantaged by Telstra's proposed switch-off of ISDN internet services on 31 December 2008. The Association is seeking feedback regarding the ISDN switch off and how it will affect bush business' and family life.

Heavy Vehicle Taskforce

The Association and representatives from the NRMA, Livestock, Bulk Carriers Association as well as other organisations attended a meeting with the NSW Minister for Roads, Hon Michael Daley to discuss industry concerns surrounding the new heavy vehicle fatigue laws that commenced on 29 September 2008. During the meeting the Association called for the removal of impractical requirements as well as the harmonisation of road and transport regulations across States. The Minister undertook to hold further discussions with the Association and other stakeholders in coming weeks regarding these issues.

NSW Grain Freight Review

The Association attended the first meeting of the newly formed NSW Grain Freight Taskforce in Sydney on Friday 7, November 2008. The Taskforce has been established by the Commonwealth Government in order to review the grain transport network in NSW and the review will specifically look at:

- Cropping patterns, densities, innovations and the likely impact of climate change;
- Market demand for grain and the impact of regulatory reform; and
- Capacity of supply chain infrastructure and the various transport options in the short, medium and long term.

The Taskforce will draw on the previous work undertaken by the NSW Grain Infrastructure Advisory Committee and it will be supported by a secretariat from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the NSW Ministry of Transport

Branch Rail Line Suspension

As part of Mini Budget, the NSW Government has announced the suspension of five branch lines as the Government believe they are unviable. These lines include: Ungarie to Lake Cargelligo, Nevertire to Warren, Cowra to Koorawatha, Koorawatha to Demondrille and Koorawatha to Greenthorpe. The decision by the State Government to suspend these grain lines is premature given the recent establishment of the joint State and Federal Grain Rail Freight Taskforce. The Association will be seeking further information regarding the suspension of these lines.

Wheat Growers and Market Information

The Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon Tony Burke MP, has announced that wheat growers will soon have access to important market information to help maximise their returns under the reformed wheat export marketing system. The project aims to produce monthly grain supply and demand reports to help improve the quality of market information available to growers. The monthly industry reports for growers will be produced by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE). Data collection is already underway and the first report will be published in February 2009, with data up to December 2008. Unfortunately this information will not be available to growers until February 2009. The Association has written to the Federal Government and advised concern about the timing of providing the market information after the majority of growers have made their grain marketing decisions.

Import Risk Analysis - Bananas

Biosecurity Australia issued the final report regarding the Import Risk Analysis for Cavendish bananas from the Philippines. The report proposes that bananas could enter Australia if the Philippines meet stringent risk management measures for pests and diseases of quarantine concern. The main diseases and pests of quarantine concern are Moko, black Sigatoka, Freckle, Mealybugs, Armoured scales, Spider mites and Thrips. Stakeholders have until 12 December 2008 (30 days) to appeal to the Import Risk Analysis Appeals Panel, which is independent of Biosecurity Australia. The Association will monitor the Import Risk Analysis.