

# Rural Affairs

## Bushfires

### Administration

**07 Mar EC:** That the Association request an immediate, independent and thorough inquiry into fire management in NSW, including but not limited to the following:

- a) a stocktake of the successes and/or limitations of risk management planning processes including environmental outcomes;
- b) a review of the implementation of recommendations from previous bushfire inquiries;
- c) analysis of National Parks and Wildlife Service funding pertaining to fire events and salaries;
- d) analysis of Section 44 declaration funding including cost-sharing arrangements, fund management and remediation works;
- e) a review of hazard reduction activities including pre-emptive firefighting, restrictions on hazard reduction activities and grazing in National Parks and private forests;
- f) analysis of the current engagement of land owners in bush fire preparedness and management activities and their understanding of the Bushfire Act; and
- g) a review of the structure, funding, operation, transparency and management of the Rural Fire Service, including the use of local knowledge and control in fire events, compensation for injured firefighters, appropriate equipment, election of group officers, Rural Fire Service staff involvement in firefighting activities, and Rural Fire Service Association membership.

**07 Mar EC:** That the Association lobby to have all bushfires supported the same as Section 44 fires, without the loss of local control.

**AC 04:** That the Association call for a review of the zoning classifications for fire ban districts and more discretion to the local fire control officers to take into account local conditions.

**AC 98:** That in relation to NSW Bush Fire administration, the Association:

(a) opposes any amalgamation of the Rural Fire Service (RFS) and the NSW Fire Brigades, but supports rationalisation of non-policy administrative tasks;

**AC 94:** (b) opposes payment of volunteer bushfire fighters; and  
(e) opposes the incorporation of the RFS into any other body.

**AC 03:** That the Association oppose

- (a) The need for fire permits to be obtained all year round; and
- (b) Any move for third party site assessment and post burn site inspection.

**03 Oct EC:** That the Association supports:

(a) the NSW Government establishing a readily available, independent public register, listing planned and actual hazard reduction burning, ecological burning, seasonal fuel load assessments and fire trail maintenance undertaken across public lands in NSW. The register should be established and run through the office of the Auditor General;

(b) a "no borders" approach to bushfire management across all land tenures and types in regional NSW. The Association Supports the Canobolas Zone Pilot Program as a means of establishing a workable framework to be applied across the State; and

(c) the development of a simplified planning and approval process to facilitate patchwork burning across private landholdings in NSW (current Land Management Zones). The Association, in conjunction with the RFS, and key stakeholders, develop and facilitate the implementation of a pilot program to establish such a framework across the State.

**AC 06:** That the Association lobby for the Rural Fire Service to suitably honour its duty of care for fire fighters' welfare.

**AC 04:** That the Association reinforce with the RFS that the participants of rural bushfire brigades are referred to and respected for their status as volunteers.

**AC 98:** That the Association seek that the WorkCover Authority ensure that all self employed volunteer fire fighters receive reasonable recompense as compensation for injury.

### Compensation

**EC OCT 08** That self employed Rural Fire Service volunteers who are injured whilst fighting fires, be paid compensation at the rate of the national average weekly wage, during their recovery or disability period.

### Fire Breaks

**EC Oct 08** adjoining public land be allowed to develop a fire break on their own land up to 200 metres wide, to protect their own land from fires escaping from public land, and/or to stop fires escaping into public land.

### Fire Control Staff

## Fire Control Staff

period so that they are at work in the peak fire season.

## Funding

**AC 98:** That in relation to bush fire funding, the Association

(f) oppose the phasing out of the supply of Bush Fire Fighting equipment for use on private vehicles; and  
(g) seek that the Service continue the policy of allowing local purchase and conversion of new and secondhand bush fire tankers to service standards and specifications.

**AC 02:** That in relation to bush fire funding, the Association:

(a) supports the pooling of funding for Fire Services with a set minimum legislative percentage going to the Rural Fire Service;

(b) seeks that the allocation of funds be distributed so as to provide a standard of fire cover taking account of the fire risk and fire protection need in each Local Government area;

(c) seeks that the distribution of funding continue to be through the Rural Fire Service;

(d) supports the abolition of the insurance premium based Fire Services Levy. This levy should be replaced by a fire levy collected at the local government level which would cover every commercial and private household in NSW to counter the widespread evasion and non-payment of the present system:

(i) on private households the system should be progressive with value;

(ii) on commercial properties the system should also be progressive with loadings as necessary for particularly hazardous premises. These could be offset by the standard of private fire service maintained;

(iii) for country areas covered by Bushfire Brigades the rate should be set at 50 per cent of the above.

(e) seeks that State and federal governments should increase the amount of money available for research into fire control and fire fighting.

**AC 02:** That the Association seek changes to the Fire Levy so that the contribution from insurance companies is replaced by a levy on all council rates so that all ratepayers contribute.

**AC 06:** That the Association strongly oppose the increase in the Fire Service Levy on rural insurance policies.

**AC 07:** That the Association:

(a) seek a rebate on the fire service levy for bona-fide rural fire service volunteers; and

(b) call on the Rural Fire Service to justify and itemise its charges to the community for the level of service provided and to ensure that any increase in fees be limited to the percentage increase allowed to local Councils by rate pegging.

**AC 06:** That the Association support the HighFire project coordinated by the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) by lobbying the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) for the continuing funding of this project up to the completion of all currently scheduled research and experimentation.

## Operations

That the Association seeks that governments should:

**AC 98:** (a) increase the penalties for the deliberate lighting of bushfires, and other offences during fire bans and the negligent control of campfires.

**AC 94:** (b) make funds available to National Parks to construct and maintain adequate firebreaks that will allow trucks to pass, and that there be a 20 metre zone where all dry timber is cleared

**AC 03:** That the Association lobby the State Minister for Emergency Services to

(a) Increase the level of hazard reduction undertaken in NPWS and State Forest controlled land.

(b) Expand broad scale, burning regimes across the landscape, to achieve the reduction of fuel load across broad areas, over a regular cycle as a cost effective tool for reducing the severity and spread of bushfires.

(c) Ensure the development and implementation any and all National Parks and State Forests bush fire plans be made in consultation with local group captains, captains, neighbouring land holders and appropriate shires.

(d) Establish buffer zones at and within the boundary of all Crown Lands and an accountable improvement in the levels of maintenance of strategic fire trails, including turning bays of at least 12m.

(e) Fund the maintenance of all bushfire trails on whether they be on private or public land, and

(f) Re-introduce sustainable grazing as a primary method of hazard reduction including within selected areas of National Parks.

## Drought and Natural Disaster

### Exceptional Circumstances

**08 Mar EC:** That the Association seek an extension of Exceptional Circumstances declarations that are currently set to expire on 30 September 2008 to overcome the inevitable cash flow crisis that will eventuate at that time in the production cycles for wool, winter crops, beef and sheepmeat and to avoid a rush of farm debt mediations.

**AC 07:** That the Association seek the following changes to Exceptional Circumstances (EC) drought assistance:

a) raising the present off-farm assets test to a level not exceeding 50% of the value of the farm assets if that value is more than the present level; and

## Exceptional Circumstances

b) ensuring an interest rate subsidy at the EC rate or at least 60% of such interest rate continues for a period of up to ten years after the end of a drought, with a moratorium on capital repayments. Interest rate subsidies would only be available on debts accrued and not capital acquisitions

**06 Oct EC:** That the Exceptional Circumstances interest rate subsidy upper limit over five years be removed.

**06 Mar EC:** That the Association express in principle support for the National Agricultural Monitoring System, in particular:

- (a) the concept of harmonisation of the drought declaration process nationally,
- (b) the standardisation of the format for Exceptional Circumstances drought applications,
- (c) the ready availability of climatic and economic data to assist with the assessment process; and
- (d) seek an extension of the system to include intensive agriculture.

**AC 03:** That the Association lobby the Federal Government to: (a) increase the cut-off thresholds for off-farm assets and income in relation to the drought income support and interest subsidies

(b) ensure applications for Exceptional Circumstances assistance be less complex, cut out the lengthy delays and red tape,

(c) ensure that the guidelines for assistance be more realistic for the farming community, particularly in relation to mixed farming enterprises and off farm assets,

(d) overhaul Exceptional Circumstances before the next drought, and

(e) introduce grants as an additional measure.

**02 Feb EC:** That the Association seek that the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements and Exceptional Circumstances assistance program be reformed concurrently to provide a more effective, integrated and transparent assistance program for farmers facing events which are beyond the scope of normal risk management, by:

(a) expanding the definition of a Natural Disaster to include frost and any events, other than drought and animal and plant disease, which should be considered under Exceptional Circumstances;

(d) implementing a joint Exceptional Circumstances application and decision making process between the Commonwealth and States, and a shared funding responsibility for business assistance;

(e) ensuring that boundaries are sufficiently flexible to allow those producers falling outside the nominated area to be able to apply for assistance based on the merit of their individual circumstances; and

(f) providing income support much earlier in the Exceptional Circumstances process, and ensuring that the initial consultation stage involves much improved participation by the local community;

(g) seek uniformity between State RAA Boards in delivery of funds.

**AC 08** That the Association lobby for any changes to Exceptional Circumstances (EC) to include extending the recovery period to at least two years and only be implemented after national consultation.

**AC 08** That the Association lobby to exclude off-farm residential property from the value of off-farm assets for exceptional circumstances where that property is the principal residence of the landholders.

## General

**AC 05:** That the Association:

(a) continue to lobby state and federal governments for drought preparedness incentives, including the pursuit of a system of drought stockfeed preparedness and through accelerated income tax deductibility for capital items;

b) lobby for the capacity for individual assessment by Centrelink for household support for farm families affected by drought

**03 Feb EC:** That an action plan be developed to ensure that fodder gets through to livestock which have become isolated due to a rainfall event at a time immediately after the breaking of the drought.

**02 Oct EC:** That the Association lobby the Federal Government to direct the Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority to relax the criteria for the release of money held in superannuation funds for businesses affected by drought.

**AC 98:** That the Association seek the introduction of a comprehensive, integrated and effective national drought policy based on drought proofing which:

(a) facilitates the early recovery of agricultural and rural industries from drought;

(b) includes a range of financial and management tools to allow farmers to effectively prepare for and manage their response to drought;

(c) includes a transition period during which appropriate incentives will be available to encourage the move to self-reliance; and

(d) maintains exceptional circumstance assistance.

**AC 95:** That the Association support the notion of allowing core breeding stock access to National Parks during extreme drought.

**AC 95:** That the Association pressure the State and Federal Government to make available to horticultural and intensive livestock industries, ie. Poultry, Pigs, Feedlots, drought relief equal to that offered to other agricultural industries.

## Natural Disaster

**AC 01:** That the Association endorse and support the development of a national Natural Disaster Relief Plan.

## Natural Disaster

That the Association, in conjunction with the NSW Department of Agriculture, seek the implementation of a flood relief policy. The essential features of such a policy should be:

- (a) a local controller (Rural Lands Protection Board and/or NSW Department of Agriculture) would have the authority to issue a flood declaration;
- (b) freight rebates be made available upon declaration of flood for the purposes of movement of fodder on-farm and include a percentage to cover aircraft costs;
- (c) the use of commercial aircraft and helicopters rather than RAAF aircraft for fodder drops;
- (d) landholders would be responsible for self-help by organising their own fodder supplies and fodder reserves; and
- (e) fodder drops only be undertaken on properties that clearly display the property name on the homestead or shearing shed roof.

**99 Oct GC:** That the Association seek that the Federal Government allow local councils to supplement the National Disaster Relief funds to enable them to replace and improve infrastructure to alleviate similar damage from future events.

**EC Mar 08:** That the Association as a matter of urgency demand that NSW flood affected farmers be treated in an equitable manner in line with flood assistance provided to flood affected Queensland farmers.

**99 Oct GC:** That the Association seek statewide equity in response and assistance given by relevant authorities following disasters

## State Assistance Measures

**08 Mar EC:** That the Association request an extension of drought support worker funding until June 2009 and that it be revised annually

**AC 07:** That the Association:

- a) lobby the State Government for a 50% rate subsidy for farmland rates;
- b) request that the State Government scrutinise the current guidelines for drought declarations in coastal areas to ensure that speedy responses can be made to the often dramatic changes in weather conditions in coastal regions; and
- c) express its concern with Governments' promotion of themselves for drought relief measures, when such self-promotion leads to misunderstanding in the cities of the equity involved in such support arrangements.

**AC 06:** That the Association vigorously lobby the State Government for the continuation of the drought freight subsidies for fodder, water and agistment or sale for areas "in drought"

**AC 03:** The Association lobby the State Government to

- (a) reduce/review waiting periods for assistance to recognise the severity and geographical extent of the drought, and
- (b) seek the abolition of asset means testing for RAA loan funding for conservation good such as bore capping and piping.

**94 Oct GC:** That the Association seek the waiving of Local Government farm land rates for primary producers in Rural Lands Protection Boards drought declared areas and that the State Government reimburse direct to the Local Government Council the value of rate instalments falling due for those primary producers.

## Education

### Apprenticeships

**AC 05:** That the Association urge the Government to give increased financial encouragement to regional based apprentices, especially regarding pre-apprenticeship technical college training.

### Fees and Allowances

**AC 03:** That the Association approach the Federal Government seeking that special consideration be given to rural students regarding the availability of youth allowance particularly in relation to:

- (a) the eligibility criteria for the independent living away from home allowances, and
- (b) the duration of the allowances.

**97 Oct GC:** That the Association seek that in relation to eligibility for the Youth Allowance the level of allowable personal student income be based on taxable income not gross income.

That the Association seeks that the Actual Means Test for the Youth Allowance:

- (a) provide an exemption for farm families involved in a partnership;
- (b) take into account the higher cost of education for rural people;
- (c) be made simpler for applicants to complete.

**AC 08** That the Association urges the Federal Government to change the criteria for grading independent youth allowance so that all rural and remote students who leave home from the age of 16, are automatically eligible for independent youth allowance once enrolled.

**94 Oct GC:** That the Association seek that education fees be fully tax deductible in the year of expense.

## Fees and Allowances

for Isolated Children (AIC).

That the Association seeks that:

- (a) If education allowances are subject to an income test then primary producers should be able to average incomes across years.
- (b) Boarding or living away from home allowances are supported as a means of providing a more equitable access to educational facilities (eg Assistance for Isolated Children).
- (c) The Federal Government removes the Assets Test for farm and small business assets from AUSTUDY, Family Assistance Supplement and Assistance for Isolated Children Allowance.
- (d) An increase in the primary correspondence allowance to the equivalent level as the secondary correspondence allowance.

**98 Oct GC:** That the Association seek reimbursement to parents for the extra costs associated with the education of rural school children isolated from schools as a consequence of floods.

**AC 99:** That the Association request the NSW Government to introduce , as a matter of urgency, recurrent funding to NSW school term hostels of \$1,000 per annum for each AIC (geographically isolated) student enrolled at the hostel.

**95 Feb GC Reaffirmed:** That the Association seek that there should be adequate facilities available for students who are required to live away from home for educational purposes.

## High School Fees

**EC Mar 09** That the Association lobby Government to address the lack of assistance for rural families to gain access to the same quality and choice of education as is available in metropolitan and large regional centres, including but not limited to the use of taxation measures to achieve this.

## Rural Education Policy

**AC 07:** That the Association seek to develop a Australian Agronomy Reserve along the lines of the Australian Veterinary Reserve.

**AC 08** That the Association continue to work with the Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA) to seek equitable access criteria for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Allowance, and continue to challenge the adequacy of some schools to be able to provide an appropriate education.

**AC 96:** That the Association actively pursue with Government the following objectives with regard to education policy:

- (a) Commitment to seeking the provision of high quality education and training to rural people, in recognition of the fact that education plays a vital role in agricultural competitiveness;
- (b) The need to promote agriculture as a viable and worthwhile career path so that the industry attracts high quality entrants;
- (c) Support the recognition of prior learning and skills learned without formal training;
- (d) Pursuit of the development of accredited career pathways throughout the education system and accreditation of courses between institutions; and

**96 Apr GC/AC 96:** (e) Recognition of the increasing need for post secondary education and the increased spectrum of skills, including farm business management, required for profitability in agriculture.

**95 Feb GC Reaffirmed:** That the Association pursue policy in support of the following:

- (a) Both government and private educational institutions be supported as important contributors to education. Governments should assist both government and private institutions to provide adequate services; and
- (b) Students should be allowed to attend the education institution of their choice.

**07 Mar EC:** That the Association lobby the State Government to facilitate the interchange of students, both rural and metropolitan, along the lines of the successful experiment conducted at Boorowa (Boorowa Educational Excursion Program).

**AC 07:** That the Association:

- a) seek to confirm that agriculture be taught in all school so that all students understand where and how food is produced and the interrelationships between producers and the environment at local, national and global levels;
- b) ask the Department of Education to include the theory of agriculture in the environment syllabus so children learn that agriculture works with the environment;
- c) actively pursue the development and adoption of a 'sustainable food and fibre production' policy at a national level for schools from K through to Yr12.

**AC 06:** That the Association:

- a) have input to ongoing rural and regional awareness programmes to primary schools throughout NSW; and

**02 Oct EC:** That the Association lobby the NSW Government to increase the level of study of the agricultural industry within the NSW school system by:

- (a) positive promotion of farmers and the farming industry in their role of feeding the nation;
- (b) providing additional funding to enable increased access by both city and country schools to "hands on" study of

## Rural Education Policy

agriculture; and

(c) introduce agriculture as a compulsory subject in primary schools.

**AC 02:** That the Association supports the continuation of agriculture as a stand alone, elective subject at all levels of the secondary school curriculum.

**AC 02:** The Association seeks that the NSW Government consult with consumer, as well as provider groups, and the NSW Farmers' Association prior to decisions being made on curriculum and delivery of agricultural education.

## School Transport

**EC Mar 08:** That the Association lobby the NSW Government for funding to be made available to allow pre-school children in isolated areas to travel and for insurance on existing school bus routes at no charge.

**98 Oct GC:** That the Association pressure the State and Federal Governments to make funds available to ensure that all school bus routes are all weather roads.

**97 Feb GC:** That the Association press for the enactment of urgent legislation to require where possible:

**96 Oct GC** (a) all rural school buses to have seat belts fitted;

**97 Feb GC** (b) no child be transported without a seat; and

**97 Feb GC** (c) bus proprietors be allowed tax exemption for the purchase of seat belts and necessary fittings.

**AC 08** That the Association seek that all pre-schoolers requiring bus travel to pre-school receive identical financial support to that received by school children travelling by bus to school.

## Schools

**AC 99:** That the Association seek that, in order to ensure that rural families have access to high quality education, the NSW Government provides:

(a) real increased funding for rural schools;

(b) access to modern telecommunication and computer technologies in all rural schools;

(c) access to specialist services as required for rural students;

(d) flexibility in staffing and enrolment guidelines for small rural schools;

(e) incentives for teachers and principals to teach in rural and remote communities;

(f) effective means of consultation and involvement of local communities in managing the school;

(g) a commitment that the formula under which teachers and teaching spaces are allocated be reviewed in consultation with small rural communities and that the formula be changed to address the needs of small rural school.

**AC 06:** That the Association promote the merit selection process for the appointment of principals and staff at the three selective government residential agricultural high schools.

**03 Oct EC:** That the Association is strongly opposed to the State Government's decision to terminate full and part time agricultural course delivery at Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture (Yanco College). The Association demands that the decision be reversed.

**AC02:** The Association supports the role of Agricultural High Schools and other agricultural education institutions.

**AC 95:** That the Association asks the Department of School Education to support an educational program of school farm-stays between Association members and metropolitan schools.

**AC 05:** That the Association call for a moratorium on teacher transfers because of reduced student numbers in Exceptional Circumstances declared areas, for a period of six months after their removal from Exceptional Circumstances.

**AC 05:** That the Association support families whose children attend their local school by lobbying both state and federal governments to initiate a revamped education equity scheme similar to the country area program that will deliver an outcome which will stop the student drift to larger centres, further disadvantaging already struggling small schools.

**AC 00:** That the Association oppose any plans for a state wide decree that would result in the downgrading of PP5 and PP6 schools or the roles of these principals by making them satellites or annexes of larger schools.

**AC 98:** That the Association develop a policy with regard to small rural schools and seek assurances from the Minister for Education that such schools will retain their autonomy and that there be no changes in status without prior consultation with, and approval from, the local school community.

## TAFE

**EC Mar 09** That the Association acknowledges and supports the Primary Industries Department of TAFE NSW Western Institute Orange Campus to continue to deliver the Certificate II in Agriculture Course No: 2452, with a focus of using horses in agriculture and low stress livestock handling techniques.

## Tertiary Education

**AC 07:** That the Association address the crisis in higher education enrolment by:

(a) seeking sponsorship from major agribusiness companies for targeted student support;

(b) seeking a waiver on relevant fees (such as HECS HELP and FEE HELP) for the first year of study in agriculture and related courses;

## Tertiary Education

(c) lobbying the Federal Government to re-classify the HECS HELP and FEE HELP banding for agriculture and related courses to bring them into line with other disciplines facing enrolment challenges.

**96 Oct GC:** That the Association express to the Federal Government its concern about the effect of increases in Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) on rural students.

**AC 07:** That the Association:

- a) seek to ensure that all agricultural affiliated science-environment degrees encompass a compulsory practical component; and
- b) address the issue of the agricultural learning facility being retained at Charles Sturt University Orange Campus; and

**94 Oct GC:** That the Association supports and urges the State Government to support the establishment of additional pastoral agricultural tertiary educational facilities in regional New South Wales.

**AC 95:** That the Association requests the NSW Department of Agriculture to continue to provide rural education at its two colleges and to develop an Associate Diploma in agriculture course to cater for those who choose such qualification

**97 Oct GC:** That the Veterinary Science Department of Sydney University be approached to make places available to students with slightly lower TER scores who:

- (a) are from country areas;
- (b) undertake to work for a minimum specified period in country regions after graduation;
- (c) are successful in an interview by a panel of large-animal vets, who determine practical suitability of candidates for rural practice.

## Rural Communities

### Child Care

**AC 02:** That the Association lobby the:

- (a) Federal Government for increased Long Day Care funding and Outside School Care places at Long Day Care centres in NSW;
- (b) State Government to increase funding for Long Day Care centres and Pre-schools.

**Oct GC:** That the Association seek better access to child care assistance for isolated rural families through the provision of mobile child care services.

**95 Oct GC:** That the Association seek to have expenses incurred by primary producers for Child Care made tax deductible.

### Daylight Saving

**AC 00:** That the Association seek that the variation to daylight saving dates for the Sydney 2000 Olympics not be repeated in future.

**AC 07:** That the Association oppose the extension of daylight saving in NSW

### Local Government

**AC 05:** That the Association ask the state government to amend the Local Government Act so that when a councillor resigns or dies the replacement be made by:

- (a) appointing the highest losing number of votes in the last council election if within 12 months of election; or
- (b) no new councillor; and
- (c) the remaining councillors continue to the end of the term if only 1 year is to run.

**AC 04:** That the Association take a proactive role to endeavour to ensure communities which have lost their councils through forced amalgamations of local government areas are not subjected to any loss of service or population as a consequence of that amalgamation, and are provided with an effective mechanism to guarantee adequate and reasonable representation.

**04 Feb EC:** That the Association vigorously oppose any forced local government amalgamations in NSW.

### Non-Metropolitan State

**AC 06:** That the Association forward a White Paper to its members outlining future options for the development of a suitable model for government (local, state and federal) and obtain feedback via all available avenues.

**AC 05:** That the Association upon receipt and consideration of the Report of the Taskforce reviewing the establishment of a non-metropolitan state, and subject to the results of the review being favourable to the establishment of such a State, actively pursue and identify the social, economic and political benefits to regional

## Non-Metropolitan State

NSW and commence an educational and lobbying campaign to allow regional NSW to consider such benefits. The aims of this motion are to be achieved through the establishment of an independent body, comprising representatives of relevant stakeholders and interest groups.

## Pension

**01 Oct EC:** That the Association pursue through the NFF that all persons aged 70 years or over be eligible to receive an age pension, which would be income tested, where their only investment asset is the family farm which is their primary place of residence.

**AC 01:** That the Association seek extension of the Commonwealth Government's Retirement Assistance for Farmers Scheme for a further three (3) year period beyond 30 June 2001, and that the asset cap be lifted from \$500,000 to \$1 million to allow more farmers to access the scheme.

**97 Oct GC:** That the Association seek that the 3 year moratorium on gifting provisions for access to the Age Pension be extended to 5 years and that the asset test and income test associated with this measure be widened in order that a greater number of farm families may be eligible.

**AC 96:** That the Association seek that, in respect of intergenerational transfers of farm realty and subsequent application of parents to the Department of Social Security (DSS) for age pensions, the DSS policy on "foregone wages" of the child be extended to cover the child's position as a minority partner or sharefarmer.

## Postal Services

**AC 95:** That the Association strongly oppose any reduction in rural postal services.

## Rail Trails

**AC 06:** That the Association oppose the construction of rail trails on disused rail corridors unless a majority of adjoining landholders support the concept.

## Rural Adjustment

**AC 00:** That the Association seek the goals outlined in the "Profitable Farmers- Growing Communities" policy statement including the implementation of an Agricultural Innovation Program, to provide information and financial assistance to enhance the profitability and diversity of Australian agriculture.

**AC 99:** That the Association pursue a rural adjustment policy that incorporates:

- (a) assistance to obtain advice and skills required to undertake a new enterprise or variation upon existing enterprises;
- (b) financial assistance to establish new enterprises where it can be demonstrated that the enterprise is viable in the long term and in need of seed funding;
- (c) greater emphasis on basic business skills for those farmers who are yet to be exposed to training;
- (d) training to provide farmers with the ability to assess the risks and opportunities associated with new enterprises;
- (e) enhanced re-establishment assistance including financial assistance for training and skills assessment of the farm family to help them decide on alternative employment; and
- (f) seek that the State and Federal Governments provide incentives to encourage business investment and infrastructure development in regional areas.

## Rural Financial Counsellors

**AC 06:** That the Association continue to support the Rural Financial Counselling Service and lobby for the new structure to retain local management.

**AC 03:** That the Association urge the Federal and State Governments to contribute more funding for the Rural Counselling Service and to remove the requirement for community funding.

**01 Feb GC:** That the Association vigorously pursue its support for the continued funding for the Rural Counselling Service in 3 year blocks.

## Rural Services and Communities

**AC 07:** That the Association lobby the NSW government to:

- a) Raise the rainwater tank rebate from \$500 to \$1500 for rural householders' in-line with metropolitan customers; and
- b) Apply the rebate retrospectively for the installation of rainwater tanks made after January 1st 2006.

**EC Oct 08** That the NSW Farmers' Association lobby NSW State Departments to instigate a guiding principal that will see any departmental information sessions relevant to rural communities being held at some venues within those communities.

**AC 08** That the Association lobby Government to remove rules and regulations which draw funds away from

## Rural Services and Communities

events held by voluntary not for profit groups in small rural communities.

**06 Mar EC:** That the Association:

(a) work to achieve a public recognition from all political parties that centralised decision-making disempowers communities and results in reduced service to communities.

**AC 03:** That the Association seek that all political parties, prior to each election, release a clear policy on major rural and regional initiatives.

**AC 02:** That the Association lobby the State Government to have identification certificates ie births, deaths and marriages made available at local motor registry offices.

**AC 00:** That the Association seek that a national policy be developed to provide water and general infrastructure to facilitate a significantly increased Australian population and that immigration policies encourage settlement in non-metropolitan areas.

**AC 98:** That the Association pressure the State Government to reverse the trend of taking Government services and staff from country towns and relocating them back to Sydney; and demand that head offices of rural based government departments such as State Forests and National Parks & Wildlife be transferred to country centres.

**AC 98:** That the Association seek:

(a) Rural Community Impact Statements (RCIS) be prepared by government to assess the financial, environmental and social impacts of government decisions affecting rural communities, and that these RCISs be freely available to the public;

(b) that the Auditor General be empowered to investigate any decision relating to the impact of the assessment; and

(c) that RCIS be required for ministerial and departmental decisions.

**AC 97:** That the Association:

(a) seek that services such as electricity, health, telephone, roads and banks in rural communities be maintained and enhanced; and

(b) seek that the profits from wholly Government owned corporations be returned to consumers rather than Government.

(c) express strong concern at the continuing demise of country towns and the rates of suicide in country areas.

**AC 98:** That the Association requires the State and Federal Governments to develop a joint strategy and action plan to address the ongoing decline of rural and regional Australia.

**AC 95:** That the welfare of farming families be a priority of the Association.

## Social Security

**AC 03:** That the Association lobby the Federal Government to correct anomalies in the social security system that penalise workers for accepting part-time or casual employment.

**96 Oct GC:** That the Association seek that when assessing a farmer's application for social security, the value of land set aside for regeneration may be deducted from this assessment.

**AC 95:** That the Association:

(a) continue to press for fairer application of the Assets Test to the rural sector in relation to all Government assistance programs.

**94 Oct GC:** (b) seek that the Assets Test be amended so that the value of the farm house and curtilage is valued at the median price of residences in the capital city of that state.

## Television and Radio Services

**EC Oct 08** That the Association lobby the Government to subsidise the cost of Pay TV and get the 3 Free to air channels on Austar because so many people can't get TV.

**98 Feb GC:** In view of the ABC being a publicly funded organisation, the Association demand that a more informed and balanced view of news and current affairs be presented.

## Young Farmers

**AC 08** That Rural Affairs Committee and Young Farmers Committee work together to develop a more equitable system of assistance to include the effect on HECS HELP and FEE HELP repayments and withdrawal rates on AUSTUDY.

**AC 08** That the Association lobby the appropriate authority to reassess the off farm income criteria for the interest rate subsidies to assist young farmers in establishing new business ventures.

**AC 08** That the Association lobby the New South Wales State Government to obtain a program similar to the Victorian Governments Young Farmer's Finance Scheme

**AC 06:** That the Association lobby the State Government to include interest subsidies in addition to the existing financial measures for the Young Farmers Finance Scheme, known as AgStart.

**AC 04:** That the Association continue to lobby the state and federal governments for a young farmer finance package.

**AC 02:** That the Association lobby Government and financial institutions to develop a program of financial

## Young Farmers

assistance, including low interest rate loans and Farm succession planning advice for young farmers to go into farming businesses.

**AC 95:** That the Association bring to the government's attention the exodus of young farmers from rural areas due to the lack of economic viability.

## Rural Health

### Aged Care

**AC 01:** That the Association actively support and pursue, as a matter of urgency, action by the State and Federal Governments to introduce a two tiered system of practical, financial and legislative support (including the Department of Veteran Affairs) for aged care in rural communities which would embrace:

- (a) transport requirements for local shopping;
- (b) integrated social needs;
- (c) counselling;
- (d) remedial and allied health services; and
- (e) meals; and

that the personnel to be used for this system to be appropriately trained and qualified people from the surrounding district (integrated industry employment in aged care in rural communities).

### Child Health

**96 Feb GC:** That the Association oppose the NSW Health Department policy under which a child under 5 cannot be admitted to hospital for more than 24 hours other than to hospitals with paediatric specialists on staff.

**AC 97:** That the Association support Government and health industry initiatives to increase the rate of child immunisation in Australia.

### Counselling

**08 Mar EC:** That the Association write to all Branches and District Councils seeking their support in the form of a monetary donation to help extend the employment of the rural Chaplaincy Counselling Services such as that provided by Les and Noeleen Barrass. That the Executive Council recommend the Association/Board approve \$15,000 towards the extension of the service.

### Dental Health

**EC Oct 08** That the Association lobby for dental work to be included under the Medicare System.

**00FebGC:** That the Association seek that the Federal Government allow bulk billing facilities by dentists for basic dental health care in rural areas to alleviate the long waiting period for access to the public system at present in place

**AC 05:** That the Association:

- (a) highlight the crisis emerging in relation to the declining number of dentistry graduates;
- (b) highlight problems associated with the change in time taken to complete the dentistry degree; and
- (c) request the appropriate Minister to introduce a scholarship scheme for rural students to train as dentists who will work in rural and regional areas after graduating.

**06MarEC:** That the Association lobby NSW Health to:

- a) implement an ongoing education campaign for rural/remote people, on the importance of good oral health, including unbiased information on fluoridation and how to access it if not on a fluoridated water supply;
- b) educate new of expecting mothers about fluoride
- c) implement a primary school education program to teach children the value in caring for their oral health; 9The Association would be asking NSW Health to provide the education, not the school teachers)
- d) Provide free unbiased fluoride information and fluoride tablets to those rural/remote families who want it; and
- e) Provide a mobile dentist truck (like the Premier's Mobile Surgery truck), which visits all rural/remote schools throughout NSW.

### Health Services

**EC Oct 08** That the Association lobby to ensure that all non-metropolitan NSW ambulances are equipped with the most modern and suitable mapping equipment.

**AC 04:** That the Association lobby the State Government to:

- (b) improve allied health services and associated infrastructure

**AC 01:** That the Association seek that the Federal and State Governments:

- (b) provide increased access to tele-health facilities for rural Australia, as identified by local community needs.

**AC 00:** That the Association seek that all small country hospitals be maintained with 24 hour emergency services or upgraded to Multi Purpose Service Status.

## Health Services

**AC 97:** That the Association continue to seek that State and Federal Governments take appropriate action to ensure equity between rural and urban communities in the provision of health services including:

- (a) increased Commonwealth funding to provide additional nursing home beds in rural towns;
- (b) continued assistance for medical aircraft services;
- (c) adequate provision be available at base or Sydney hospitals for emergency cases to be admitted and treated speedily;
- (d) a range of specialised services in regional centres, at no greater total cost than city dwellers;
- (e) improved hospital and medical services, especially in small rural communities (**AC 98**);
- (f) adequate funding for successful health models that are being used by local communities (**AC 98**); and
- (g) there is improved access to allied Health Services in rural areas and that funding for community Health Services be increased so this can be achieved (**AC 99**).

**01 Oct EC:** That the Association support the introduction of Medicare item numbers for patient to doctor consultations via videoconferencing.

**97 Feb GC:** That the Association seek that funding for Rural Health Training Units be maintained at not less than the present level.

## Health Workforce

**AC 04:** That the Association lobby the State Government to:

- (a) fast-track the filling of approved nurse practitioner positions
- (c) release a list of vacancies in rural area health services, including the time these positions have been vacant, and announce their strategies to fill these positions.

**AC 02:** That the Association lobby the Federal Government to provide specific funds to ensure adequate nursing enrolments in tertiary institutions.

**AC 01:** That the Association seek that the Federal and State Governments:

- (a) urgently implement incentives for nursing and allied health professionals working in rural locations, as already provided to medical practitioners;

**01 Feb GC:** That the Association seek that when Multi Purpose Service (MPS) arrangements are set up in country towns, suitable staff accommodation be provided if not already available.

**AC 00:** That the Association seek:

- (a) that government restrictions be eased to allow qualified overseas trained doctors to work in country areas and that the Association actively encourage overseas trained nurses to have a working holiday in rural Australia during the next four to six years; and
- (b) provision for costs of travel by allied health workers to employment (where private vehicle usage is the only available means of transport), to be offset through either:
  - (i) a direct motor vehicle subsidy per km basis;
  - (ii) a tax deduction for motor vehicle costs relating to travel to place of employment; and
- (c) that the travel allowance be based on distance from home to workplace and be paid to the individual.

**AC 97:** That the Association continue to support measures to address the critical shortage of rural doctors including:

- (a) Medicare Provider Numbers be allocated according to need based on population per geographic area with preference for metropolitan provider numbers being given to those doctors who have spent at least five (5) years in a rural practice (**AC 99**);
- (b) a quota of at least 25% of medical students in all Australian medical schools be drawn from country candidates (**AC 99**);
- (c) an appropriate quota of medical students drawn from country candidates (**AC 99**);
- (d) strategies to increase the rural component of medical training (**AC 99**);
- (e) investigation of providing and funding rural interest weekends for medical students in country areas (**AC 99**);
- (f) requesting that it become mandatory for medical students to serve part of their internship in hospitals outside the Newcastle/Sydney/Wollongong area (**AC 99**).
- (g) medical graduates who guarantee to practice in the country be granted an exemption on HECS on a pro-rata basis according to the length of stay in rural areas (**AC 99**); and
- (h) better locum support services be provided for rural doctors wishing to continue their professional education (**AC 99**).

**AC 98:** That the Association develop strategies to promote rural and remote area nursing issues and seek increased support for these practitioners.

## IPTAAS

**05 Oct EC:** That the Association, in respect to the Isolated Patients Transport and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS), lobby the State Government to:

- (a) reduce the distance criteria from 200km to 80km (160 km round trip);
- (b) allow patients a choice of specialist;
- (c) increase the kilometre rate from the existing 12.7c per kilometre; and
- (d) remove the patient contribution of \$40 per application.

# Rural Policing and Justice

## Family Law Act

**AC 97:** That the Association seek further amendments to the Family Law Act (1975) to ensure that:

- (a) pre and post nuptial financial agreements that seek to quarantine business property which is brought into the marriage by one party only, be legally recognised and enforceable under the Family Law Act;
- (b) such financial agreements to be in writing on a standard agreement contract, signed by both parties and witnessed by independent professional advisers; and
- (c) the courts do not have a residual discretion to intervene in this type of agreement.

**96 Oct GC:** That the Association seek to have the Family Law Act amended to ensure that:

- (a) the Act relates only to assets acquired during the course of cohabitation;
- (b) property and assets brought into the relationship remain with the original owner in the event of action under Family Law;
- (c) each partner retain their own inheritances regardless of when they are received; and
- (d) each party receive fair compensation for work and contribution made during the relationship.

## Firearms

**AC 04:** That the Association express its extreme concern about the inability of the Firearms Registry to keep up with licence renewals and request that until the Registry catches up with the backlog of renewals, a moratorium be put on fines for farmers waiting for licence renewals.

**AC 00:** That the Association seek:

- (a) the urgent introduction into new laws which would enable the Firearm Registry to determine application to register privately owned unregistered firearms; and
- (b) an indefinite amnesty for the owners of unregistered firearms which become registered under the proposed law.

**AC 98:** That the Association seek that:

- (a) the 28 day cooling off period for purchasing an additional firearm be abolished for primary producers holding on existing firearms licence; and
- (b) the safe storage requirements for Category C firearms be simplified.

**96 Jun GC:** That the Association's policy in relation to firearms be as follows:

**AC 96:** (a) That there be national registration of firearms and that this process be linked to the current licensing of gun users. This database of information should be exempt from Freedom of Information Act in NSW and only be accessible to the Department of Police.

- (b) That the cost of licensing remain as low as possible and that registration of firearms be at no cost to the individual in order that all current owners are encouraged to register their guns.
- (c) One registration should suffice indefinitely with notification to be made to the authorities upon any change in the status of the registration. (ie transfer of ownership, modification or destruction).
- (d) There should be a permit to allow minors to use firearms solely under the supervision of a fully licensed adult. This permit would be available to minors from the ages of 12 to 18 and would be subject to a written test. The current provisions of the Prohibited Weapons Act in NSW are adequate to address this matter.
- (e) That the fact of an individual being a bona-fide primary producer, or an employee, be sufficient criteria to own guns in categories A and B.
- (f) Persons, including primary producers, should show further genuine need to own guns in other categories. It must be recognised that there are sound reasons for some primary producers or their employees to own guns in categories C and D for legitimate uses on farm including the humane control of feral animals and vermin as well as the quick and humane destruction of critically ill stock.
- (g) It must be recognised that whether or not a farmer chooses to own a semi-automatic has always been based on his or her own assessment of the need. It will be extremely difficult for a third party to objectively assess that need.
- (h) There should be a right of appeal for rejected gun licence applicants, which should entail three letters of reference and primary producer declaration by others as well as a check against RLPB records.
- (i) Storage of firearms should be as agreed at the Australian Police Ministers' Council with specific measures to ensure the safe keeping of firearms.
- (j) Regulations should be specified to allow the safe but practical transport of firearms between properties, and within properties.
- (k) There should be a rebate on firearms training costs in NSW.

That the Association seeks that the definition of a professional shooter should be one who can demonstrate genuine need, expertise and responsibility. Primary producers should be able to qualify under this section provided the need can be demonstrated.

That the Association seek that ammunition supply for all guns only be available upon the presentation of a licence.

## Penalties

**96 Apr GC:** That the Association seek that where juveniles are convicted of vandalism to public utilities the cost of

## Penalties

repair to those utilities be borne by the parents or guardians of the offender.

## Police Services

**06 Mar EC:** That the Association support rural communities' efforts to have police positions filled by active officers.

**AC 98:** That the Association support moves to ensure the maintenance of law and order, including parental responsibility, in all sections of the community.

**96 Feb GC:** That the Association oppose the reduction of operating hours of police stations and the closure of police stations.

**EC Oct 08** That the Association lobby the State Government to facilitate the appointment of police officers to rural stations by:

- a) abandoning the current policy of relying on officers responding to vacant position advertisements;
- b) reverting to the previous policy of appointing officers to rural stations or significantly increasing incentives to staff rural stations;
- c) upgrading police residences to an acceptable liveable standard.

## Security and Licensing

**AC 07:** That the Association call for a review of security arrangements and liquor licences with the intent to reduce the onerous regulations and costs to rural community organisations such as shows and rodeos.

## Violence

**96 Oct GC:** That the Association approach the Government to take stronger controls over violence shown on TV, videos and the media in an effort to prevent violent crimes.

## Telecommunications

### Broadband Internet

**AC 08** That the Association lobby Telstra to continue the ISDN Home Service, which provides rural Australians a clean, efficient and cost effective alternative to Broadband and Next G internet services.

### Mobile Service and Coverage

**AC 06:** That the Association lobby to ensure a seamless transition from CDMA to 3G technology such that new mobile telephone services are an improvement on current services and are protected under the Universal Service Obligation and Digital Data Service Obligation.

## Policy and Legislation

**06 Oct EC:** That the Association form an Alliance with likeminded rural stakeholder groups. The alliance would seek to:

- a) Lobby for the extension of mobile and broadband coverage to areas that currently lack these services;
- b) Ensure price parity with metropolitan areas on telecommunications services;
- c) Ensure Universal Service Obligations are maintained and upheld; and
- d) Take the lead in distributing non-biased, independent information about mobile networks, broadband access and telecommunications hardware.

**05 May EC:** That the Association:

(a) demand quality, affordable and equitable telecommunications be delivered to all telecommunications customers now and in the future;

(b) That the Association seek urgent amendments to telecommunications legislation and legislative instruments such as the

\* Universal Service Obligation,

\* Customer Service Guarantee,

\* Network Reliability Framework

to ensure quality, affordable and equitable telecommunications are delivered to all customers in NSW, both now and in the future.

(c) That the Association seek Federal Government support for the introduction of a legislated, national service and pricing policy.

(d) That the Association seek legislative amendments to ensure the equivalence principle in terms of both service and price – with a requirement that future legislative amendments may only proceed with the support of all State, Territory and the Federal Governments; with adequate resources allocated specifically to meet NSW Farmers Association's future-proofing requirements.

**04 Apr EC:** That the Association lobby Telstra and the Minister for Communication for the inclusion of the cost of repairs for the Rural and Remote Satellite Service into the Universal Service Obligation (USO).

## Service/Pricing

**AC 07:** That the Association:

- a) lobby Telstra and the Federal Government to improve the Next G850 MHz Network Service to provide adequate accessories, equipment and handsets to allow choice, service and device equivalence and highlight the current scarcity in Next G850 MHz resources in relation to current CDMA network service.
- b) highlight the role of the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) in addressing poor performance in the telecommunications industry.
- c) urgently press the Federal Government for a commitment to subsidise communication service for communities in Next G 850 MHz black spot areas; and
- d) lobby telecommunications service providers to waive the cost of modems (hardware) for wireless internet service in rural and regional NSW.

**AC 00:** That the Association seek indemnity against accidental damage and loss of business for land owners who have cables or pipes belonging to utility companies running across their property.

**AC 99:** That the Association seek that Telstra automatically compensates subscribers for loss of service rather than the onus being on subscribers to claim compensation;

**01 Mar GC:** That the Association pursue that all calls within an existing area code zone be priced as a local call.

## Young Farmers

### First Farm Buyer

**EC Mar 09** That the Association lobby the Federal Government to add to the current 'first home buyers grant' to include a 'first farm buyers grant' that uses zoning titles to determine farming land, an established agricultural production within 12 months of purchased date and with the initial grant being a percentage cash payment of 10% of purchase price up to a limit of \$100000.