

Dear Members,

As we are all far too aware, drought continues to be a major issue for farmers in NSW.



The latest drought figures released by the NSW Government last week show that the amount of the State in drought has dropped slightly from 64.6 per cent in July to 63.9 per cent in August. While this is to be welcomed, the State requires significant rainfall soon, as the situation is only going to become increasingly dire for Members with winter crops in desperate need of a good drink.

On a brighter note, the news that the Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, has requested the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) to re-examine conditions under the Horticulture Award is an excellent result for horticulturists.

This comes off the back of extensive lobbying by the Association and the National Farmers' Federation on the Horticulture Award issue and means that the concerns our Horticulture Members raised around Hours of Work and Piecework clauses under the Award should be addressed. I encourage Members to review this information in the Association Update Report for the week just ending for further information regarding this.

Other news that has arisen over the past fortnight is the announcement by the NSW Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, Carmel Tebbutt, last week that a Statutory review of the Native Vegetation Act 2003 will occur over the next eight weeks. The Association lobbied heavily on behalf of Members when the Act was originally introduced, and we will continue to do so now with our Submission to this review. However, as I said above, the Act itself provides for this review and Members should not be unduly alarmed.

Another review the Association is currently involved in is the Standards and Guidelines for sheep. Delegates to Annual Conference will recall that an Animal Welfare (Standards and Guidelines) Taskforce was established to review and, where appropriate, suggest changes to the draft Standards and Guidelines.

This Taskforce, comprising representatives from our Cattle, Sheepmeat, Wool and Animal Welfare Committees, has already met and started work on the Guidelines. It is imperative that as an Association we are involved in this review on behalf of our Members, as once the Standards and Guidelines have been finalised, they are set to become the benchmark for all other livestock industries. It is essential that we get it right.

Work is also underway on ensuring the grains industry has credible representation on a national level. The Association has been holding discussions with the other State farming Organisations regarding advancing the concept of a national grains body.

My thanks must go to all the Members who came up to me and said hello at AgQuip last week – it was great to see so many of you there and to have a yarn with you. As I mentioned in my last email, AgQuip saw the start of our Membership Drive and we welcome those new Members who signed up at the field days. Just a reminder that the Drive is running from now until 13 November, and if you sign up a new Member, you will receive an extra three months of Membership at no extra cost.

I look forward to meeting with many more of you in the next two weeks as I kick off my tour of the Western Division. All Members are welcome to meet with me as I travel throughout the region – for all dates, times and locations, click [here](#).

And finally, the second installment in my fortnightly video update can be found by here: www.youtube.com/NSWFarmers.

Until next time,

Charlie Armstrong