

# Media Release

Thursday 1 May 2008  
PR/081/08



## Ag apprenticeship rethink

The NSW Farmers' Association welcomes the Federal Government's rethink on the funding for farm apprenticeship incentives.

NSW Farmers' Association Rural Affairs Committee Chair Alan Brown says the Government's decision to reinstate this valuable project reflects the strong need for trained people in the agricultural sector.

"We strongly criticised the previous decision to axe this program, so it is good to see that the Government has listened to farmers on this issue," Mr Brown said.

"Without the ability to attract apprentices and develop the skills, education and training of our future workforce, farming's future capacity to generate economic wealth was in serious jeopardy," he said.

The Agriculture and Horticulture Apprenticeship Incentives Program allows Australian apprentices undertaking a Cert II, III and IV qualification in agriculture or, if in a rural or regional area, horticulture to apply for an \$800 tool kit and up to \$1000 to cover course fees in the first and second year.

"We have key labour shortages in agriculture and horticulture which are only getting worse, so we would now strongly urge people to look into taking up these incentives," Mr Brown said.

"When we are finally in a position to move beyond the drought, it is estimated that Australia will require a further 50,000 to 70,000 workers to meet farm capacity. Australian farms underpin 12% of GDP and our productivity growth has outstripped that of nearly every other industry over the last 20 years.

"Given this, we would remind the Federal Government that there is still a large gap in funding for essential training programs within the rural sector following the axing of FarmBis.

"It is still unclear what the Government's intentions are in terms of replacing what was an enormously popular program enabling farm businesses to improve their business management; climate change preparedness; sustainability and other skills.

"We have a very clear case for the need for support in training for our vital industry, and while the Government has recognised this in part, we would like them to further address this growing problem," Mr Brown concluded.

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