

Budget fails for farming and rural communities



By Ellen McNamara -
Media Officer

The NSW Farmers' Association says the NSW Government has failed to invest in rural NSW in the State Budget, with the exception of some minimal expenditure in rural health and the Hume Highway.

NSW Farmers' Association President Charles Armstrong says the Association is extremely concerned about cuts to research, development and extension services (R, D and E), especially when food security is such a major issue.

"The NSW Government had a chance to help NSW farmers lead the way in securing our role in meeting the global food crisis, and the failure to do this will have wide ramifications," Mr Armstrong said.

"The Government is very aware that currently every Australian farm business feeds 600 people every year; 150 domestically and 450 overseas and that this needs to increase by 70 per cent by 2050 to meet the global food crisis," he said.

"Yet the Budget sees a cut of 31 per cent in capital expenditure, and 10 per cent in total expenditure in R, D and E, which absolutely decimates our capacity to meet this challenge," he said.

The Association had called for



Before speaking with media, NSW Farmers' Association Senior Policy Staff member, Danny Rey-Conde discusses rural spending with President Charles Armstrong on the lawns of Parliament House.

significant investment in food security and climate change, rural transport and infrastructure and rural services.

"Essentially, this Budget has ignored these key areas for rural and regional NSW," Mr Armstrong said.

"There is no money for helping farmers to adapt and manage climate change, or for meaningful water initiatives.

"While the Government claims a large

percentage of the roads budget is for regional and rural NSW, we'd argue that it's mostly spending for up and down the coast, with the exception of \$330 million for the Hume Highway.

"There is nothing to reflect the need for more money for rural infrastructure, and no sign of money to secure the Government's response to the NSW Grain Freight Review."

The NSW Farmers' Association acknowledges spending in rural health, specifically for the first stages of new hospitals for Wagga and Tamworth.

"However we are concerned that these announcements clearly show a massive gap between spending in urban areas and that in rural NSW," Mr Armstrong concluded.

A full summary of rural spending can be found on the Association's website, www.nswfarmers.org.au

Federal Election Campaign moves into top gear

The NSW Farmers' Association has signaled farmers' property rights as its key campaign issue in the lead up to the Federal Election due to be called later this year.

NSW Farmers' Association President Charles Armstrong says the goal that the Association seeks to achieve during the 2010 Federal Election campaign is to influence the major political parties to establish property rights for farmers within the policies that they take to the election.

"According to the UN, agricultural production must increase by 70 per cent in order to continue feeding the world. For Australia to contribute to global food security then farmers' rights must be protected," Mr Armstrong said.

"Like all business, certainty is required to secure a farmer's investment in growing food and fibre. This can only happen when property rights are valued and protected.

"Farmers are sustainable managers of the land and the environment, and they help drive regional economies. If governments take away their fundamental right to manage their land and cultivate a productive sustainable return, then government should compensate them for that loss.

"We have sent an open letter to all MPs outlining this election focus, and we are calling on them to respond. We are happy to meet with any of them at any time to discuss these issues."

Families Needing Farmers Campaign



Faces of the campaign Ben Dark (insert) and promising Australian cricketer Phil Hughes (front line - centre) with Association Chief Executive Shaughn Morgan and his staff.

Each Australian farm family feeds 600 people; 150 of these are in Australia, and the remaining 450 are overseas. By 2050, it is expected each Australian farmer will be feeding 1000 people worldwide.

Despite the importance of farmers in the lives of Australian households, disconnect between the city and the country remains a big issue and will be a focus of a public awareness campaign to be launched by the Association at the 2010 Annual Conference.

Based on the *Every Family Needs a Farmer* campaign being run by AgForce, the NSW Farmers' Association campaign will include a television commercial and website aiming to reconnect metropolitan consumers with their country cousins.

NSW Farmers' Association President, Charles Armstrong says there is a strong need for a campaign to improve the connection consumers have with farmers.

"Research is showing Sydneysiders are least connected with food production and don't care as long as the food keeps coming," Mr Armstrong said.

The Association is in discussions with

Channel 9 who have provided a great deal of support for the campaign.

"Channel 9 are quite keen to help with the project and see it fitting in quite well with its Farmer Wants a Wife program," Mr Armstrong said.

Media personality Ben Dark has been signed on for the campaign as well as up and coming cricketing sensation Phillip Hughes.

Mr Armstrong says the campaign will not stop with a television commercial.

"We have a medium-term strategy on this campaign and we see it building throughout the years," said Mr Armstrong.

Also included in this year's launch of the campaign will be a website highlighting the produce Members are producing around the State.

Association Members are being encouraged to get behind the campaign, by providing information for the interactive website.

Members are encouraged to contact their local Rural Members Coordinator for more details about the website.



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