

# Region 12 Update

July 2008

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Dear Western Division Members,

I would like to start this newsletter by thanking all of the members who were able to come along to the reactivation of the Wilcannia/White Cliffs Branch. It was a great meeting and a fantastic social gathering of over 40 able to make it.

This years Annual Conference is fast approaching and is expected to be one of the best yet with Regional Food Fair, The Awards Dinner and the Young Farmers Forum giving delegates an action packed week. If you are registered as a delegate for this years Annual Conference and have not received your delegate pack please let me know and I will get one to you ASAP.

I hope you find this newsletter of value and I welcome your input and feedback at any time.

Kind Regards  
Dougall

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## Policy update

### Rural Lands Protection Board Review

On Wednesday 18 June 2008, the NSW Minister for Primary Industries Hon Ian Macdonald MLC, announced at the Rural Lands Protection Board ('RLPB') Conference in Coffs Harbour that he will modernise the State's Rural Land Protection Boards – including consolidating the number of Boards from 47 to 14 – and adopt the series of recommendations contained in an independent report. The Minister stressed that the changes do not affect frontline services of RLPBs, but rather focus at reducing costs and streamlining the organisation's governance functions. The Association has developed a document which analyses the recommendations contained in the report and this document is currently under consideration by Executive Council

### NSW Drought Figures

The June 2008 drought figures were released during the week and they indicated a continued worsening in conditions, with 62.7% of the State now 'in drought' (up significantly from 48.4% in May 2008), with a further 23.7% of the State considered 'marginal'. It should be noted that only 13.6% of the State is considered 'satisfactory' from a climate perspective, much lower than the 28% reported in May, and down dramatically from the 45.6% reported in April.

### Climate Change

On Monday 16 June 2008 the Association attended a Department of Climate meeting regarding the design of the Emissions Trading Scheme ('ETS'). A presentation was given by Treasury on the modeling which has occurred in relation to the scheme which is largely at a macro level, looking at general impacts on the economy of different emissions reduction targets. It was clear that the modeling process will have little impact on ETS design other than aspects relating to the trajectory of the cap. The modeling process will not provide the on-farm profitability impact analysis which is required by agriculture. The National Farmers Federation has subsequently contacted the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics, the Office of the Federal Minister for Agriculture Hon Tony Burke and the Rural Industries and Research Corporation regarding the need for on-farm ETS analysis as a matter of urgency.

### Horticulture Code of Conduct

The Horticulture Committee is pleased that their long campaign to highlight the behaviour of traders who declare themselves merchants yet behave as agents has caught the eye of the Federal Department of the Treasury as this behaviour affects the Government's GST revenue on services. The Committee understands this is a direct result of growers providing evidence to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission ('ACCC') during the Grocery Prices Review and the ACCC forwarding their concerns to the Government. The Committee is hopeful that this new interest will trigger change and it will be advising the Government of our policy.

Furthermore, the ACCC has commenced proceedings against a merchant in the Sydney Markets who has offered his suppliers a price range which is in contravention of the Horticulture Code of Conduct. The Committee has been arguing that at the very least, the ACCC needs to bring cases of non compliance to court but that the best scenario would be for the ACCC to have enforcement and inspection powers under the Code. The Committee hope that this current case will provide a clear signal to traders who declare themselves as merchants

### New Guidelines Announced for the Australian Broadband Guarantee

This week the Federal Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, the Hon Steven Conroy, announced the guidelines for new phase of the Australian Broadband Guarantee program, beginning Monday 4 August 2008. Some of the changes included in the new program include:

- Up-front payments for large infrastructure deployments.
- Greater flexibility in subsidy levels.
- Improved consumer protections.
- A higher level of broadband service.

The Association has been actively campaigning Government to increase funding for the program, outlining its importance to rural and regional Australians via a number of submissions to various Government enquiries.

### Emissions Trading Scheme

Professor Garnaut's report on the Emissions Trading Scheme was released on Friday, 4 July 2008. The report focuses on documenting drastic impacts of failure to act on climate change. It identifies agriculture, particularly dry land cropping and irrigation in the Murray Darling, as the sector most at risk from climate change, saying that climate change will have "a severe and costly impact ... by mid century the no-mitigation case is likely to lead to major declines in agricultural production across much of the country. Irrigated agriculture in the Murray-Darling Basin is likely to lose half of its annual output. This would lead to changes in our capacity to export food and a growing reliance on food imports, with associated shifts from export parity to import parity pricing. No mitigation will lead to a 92% decline in irrigated agricultural production in the Basin by 2100, affecting dairy, fruit, vegetables, grains." Other key points include a proposal to auction off all permits and to give at least half of the proceeds to low income consumers. The report acknowledges that agriculture is the sector that would face the highest costs as a ratio to production value if required to purchase permits but offers no solutions in this regard. As does the Federal Government, the report advocates establishment of an international permit market, with prices driven by binding national emissions

caps. In this model the abatement target is set and the carbon price is left to the market to determine. The report states that "Any effort prior to effective, comprehensive global agreement should be short, transitional, and directed at achievement of global agreement." In other words, we should not lock into anything rash until the rest of the world signs up, however the report fails to explain, however, why nations will in fact sign up for a model that results in unbounded economic costs. Prominent dissenting commentators such as Professor Warwick McKibbin have argued that most nations will reject a market model that does not provide certainty about the carbon price. The Association is working with NFF to analysis the report, a copy of the report can be accessed from [http://www.garnautreview.org.au/domino/Web\\_Notes/Garnaut/garnautweb.nsf](http://www.garnautreview.org.au/domino/Web_Notes/Garnaut/garnautweb.nsf)

### **Industrial Relations**

Workplace Relations Ministers Council

The Workplace Relations Ministers Council met in Brisbane on 23 May 2008. At the meeting the participants agreed in principle to the Intergovernmental Agreement for Regulatory and Operational Reform in Occupational Health and Safety (IGA). The Council also endorsed a governance framework for a uniform national workplace relations system for the private sector as part of Forward with Fairness. In particular the principles allow States to elect how and if they enter the national system. This includes the specific issues that the State wish to enter the national system. The principles include a commitment to develop a governance agreement to deal with any proposal to amend the system after 1 January 2010.

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### **2008 Membership Renewals**

March April & May renewals are currently being received by the Member Service Centre - be sure to return your renewal form before your Association membership benefits cease. Make sure you are getting the most out of your membership by utilising our business partners and sponsors, and our wide range of in-house services such as our professional Industrial Relations team. For any queries regarding your membership or your having difficulties paying, please don't hesitate to contact me or our Member Service Centre on 1300 794 000.

**Also, if you are a financial member of the Association, you could be in the running to win one of three Garmin hand-held GPS navigation devices worth \$359 thanks to WFI – all you have to do is agree to receive an obligation free quote on your insurance!**

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### **Education & Training**

The Association is offering practical, relevant training specifically designed for farmers. Workshops also currently available include Succession Planning, Farm Safety Management, Understanding Farm Financial Statements, First Aid and Chemical Card™. If you would like a workshop in your area, please contact Kathy Sims or Robyn Diamond on **(02) 6884 8822** to register your interest. Please note that workshops require a minimum of 10 participants.

The Association and TAFE will combine to offer Front End Loader training/assessment required for WorkCover licenses to Members by home study and practical assessment from end of July 2008. This will be WorkCover accredited and available in all areas of NSW at a significant saving for members. Minimum group size is 8 people. A similar approach is being developed for Forklift training/assessment, with other licenses to be considered for future offerings. This initiative was developed through negotiation between the Association's training section and TAFE and is a significant improvement in the delivery of machinery licence training for farmers, reducing the time away from the farm from three days to less than one day.

Please note that you can now **do your chemical refresher training without leaving home** via the Association's new online course!

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### **What's on in the Western Division**

Enngonia Races – Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2008

NSW Farmers Association Annual Conference – 29<sup>th</sup> 31<sup>st</sup> July 2008 Homebush Olympic Park

Louth Races – Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2008

Ag Quip Gunnedah – 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> August 2008

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### **Young Farmers Forum "Homebush Olympic Park"**

The Forum will commence on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> July at Sydney Showground, Sydney Olympic Park and conclude on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> July. Registration is once again FREE and inclusive of all sessions, attendance at the NSW Farmers' Association Annual Awards Dinner Event and one night's accommodation.

Registrations close Friday 18<sup>th</sup> July and you can register online now by clicking on the link below:

[http://www.nswfarmers.org.au/annual\\_conference/yff\\_registration\\_form](http://www.nswfarmers.org.au/annual_conference/yff_registration_form)

We look forward to seeing you at the Forum!

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### **Member Sponsor and Business Partner Benefits**

- **AgCentral** – Special prices on farm chemicals, fertiliser and animal health products
- **Manchester Unity** – Corporate Rate
- **Prime Super** – Superannuation tailored to the rural industry
- **Mitsubishi Motors** – Members receive Mitsubishi's National Fleet Discount & \$500 worth of free genuine Mitsubishi accessories
- **Wesfarmers Federation Insurance (WFI)** – Farm & Business Insurance tailored to the rural industry.

Personal service with traditional values

- **Tax Advice Service** – Free of charge personalised online tax advice service for personal and business taxation matters
- **Beaurepaires** – Large discounts to list prices including tyres & batteries (varies per product).
- **Regional Express (REX)** – Cheapest available airfare OR 20% off full economy fare
- **HE Silos** – 5% discount on all silos
- **Diamond Petroleum** – Discounts on bulk fuel purchases (35,000) litres
- **Maddison Safety** – 20% off Personal Protective Equipment and signs
- **Repco** – Various discounts at all auto part outlets in NSW
- **David Benn fine jewellery** – 10% Discount on all jewellery items (*formerly Arthur C Easy*)
- **SoilTech Australia** – 15% discount on soil tests
- **Golden Chain Motor Inns** - 10% discount on rack rates
- **Hertz Car Hire** – Corporate discount on car hire

**Note: privileges are subject to change and are current at time of publication.**

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**"Together we're a force to be reckoned with"**