

Dear Members

Last week has been spent talking about drought, both with Members and with stakeholders in our industry.



In response to one of our worst droughts in history, and prospects of another failed season for some, we organised two meetings. Our Open Community Drought Forum in Lake Cargelligo last Tuesday night saw over 140 farmers from around that district turn out, which is a pretty good indication of the seriousness of the issue in that particular region.

We took the messages from this meeting to Griffith the next day for the Associations Drought Workshop, held with key stakeholders. So in essence, across two regions and with input from everyone involved in our industry, we put our minds to how we can make the system work better, how we can make it apply to more people and to the local communities and generally improve what's available.

What has come out of these meetings is a refocusing on drought, which in some circles appears to have dropped off the agenda, probably because it's been going on for just so long. The highest priority decided was maintenance of the EC provisions with some broadening of the eligibility criteria to allow greatest access to what is available. Government assistance extended to cover the full community and the infrastructure of those communities was the next priority. We need these communities to be there and alive and well when we come out of this drought.

The third priority is to seek a long term plan for agriculture from both state and federal government so as to establish the value the Government places on agriculture, so we can have some certainty to continue investing in our industry.

I have also spent the last few weeks talking about our Australian Farmers Fighting Fund. I have done so because I want to make sure people know that it's there for us in cases where what we do is under threat from unfair and unwarranted barriers. You can read some examples of how it's been used in the past by heading to the [Associations website](#), and also hear Member Tim Duddy and Grains Committee Chair Mark Hoskinson talk to [Primary Report](#) about recent cases.

Until next fortnight,
Charles Armstrong

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