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State Government urged to continue drought support

The NSW Farmers' Association says the NSW Government's extension of the drought Transport Subsidy Scheme is very welcome, but says the Government can do more to assist drought affected farmers.

NSW Farmers' Association President Jock Laurie says while extending the Transport Subsidies for another 3 months will be a great relief for farmers, there are other programs the Association is worried about.

"We are hearing first hand from our members around the state, and I am concerned that many areas of the state are likely to remain 'in drought' for at least the next six months. In light of this, I am very pleased that our efforts to have the transport subsidies program extended have been successful," Mr Laurie said.

"We are however, calling for significant extensions to the funding arrangements for Drought Support Workers and the Farm Family Gathering program. Funding is only guaranteed to the end of the year, and with Exceptional Circumstances due to expire in March 2008 for most regions of the state, demands for their vitally important services will be higher than ever," Mr Laurie said.

"It is imperative that their funding be extended for at least another two years, particularly in light of the important community-development role many have adopted. Farm Family Gatherings in particular are an important ingredient to mental health and wellbeing in rural communities, particularly in times of stress," he said.

"Our Rural Mental Health Network has also been pushing for their funding to be extended, due to Drought Support Workers' excellent efforts at addressing social isolation, which obviously is a major issue in difficult times for rural communities.

"The State Government's ongoing support is an absolute necessity for the well being of farmers, many of whom are facing very difficult situations. We look forward to working further with the Government to ensure we have the best support for our farming families," Mr Laurie concluded.

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Fast fact: Farmers spend more than \$1.1 billion on weed prevention & \$900 million on soil-related activities