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## **Greater Centrelink access for farmers**

Farmers across the State now have easier access to Centrelink with a Rural Service Officer now working at NSW Farmers' Association.

NSW Farmer's Association Rural Affairs Chairman Alan Brown hopes the new arrangement will make it easier for drought affected farmers to get the information they need, just by calling the Association.

"We are very pleased to welcome Chris Styles to our office and hope farmers can utilise his services," Mr Brown said.

Centrelink's Chris Styles can answer questions relating to Exceptional Circumstances (EC), the new Irrigation Management Grant, Farmhelp and the Federal Government's Exit Program.

"He will also be able to speak to farmers about other issues including Youth Allowance and Family Payments," Mr Brown said.

"Often farmers are hesitant to call a second number when they call the Association for assistance – now they can be transferred directly and have their question answered on the spot," Mr Brown said.

Chris Styles will work at the NSW Farmers' Association office in Sydney every Tuesday and Wednesday from 9am to 5pm.

"If farmers call on a day that Chris is not available, their details will be taken and he will call them back on the first day he is available," Mr Brown said.

Centrelink National Manager Murray Darling Basin Kate Hay said this was a new innovative way to help reach out to farmers in this time of drought. The arrangement will be for a three month trial period.

"We are also pleased to be undertaking this project with NSW Farmers' Association to ensure the information gets to where it's needed," Kate Hay said.

"This initiative arose out of a discussion at a recent Rural Mental Health Network coordinated by the Association and we are delighted to see it begin," Mr Brown said.

To contact Centrelink at the NSW Farmers' Association, Members should call 1300 794 000.

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