

Dear Members



I am pleased to write that we have succeeded in delaying the Mining and Petroleum Legislation Amendment Bill this week.

The Bill seeks to revoke a recent Supreme Court decision and Land and Environment Court decision, both of which sought to support farmers' property rights and ensure landholders were properly consulted.

Given the complexity of this issue, we joined with the State Opposition and others groups to request the Bill be circulated by Government for proper consultation and review. A delay of three weeks, to the next sitting of Parliament, is not unreasonable given the potential severity of impact from the proposed Bill as it currently reads. You can expect more news on this issue.

This week we also announced an alliance with WAFarmers to create a new representative grain growers body – National Grains Australia (NGA). We have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with our WA counterpart because we believe the need for such a body is overwhelming. To begin with, our model will be supported by the State Farm Organisations, meaning it will be extremely efficient, and good value for growers. Once established, the NGA Board will decide the further development and if necessary any additional sources of funding. We are in discussion with our other States, and hope to progress the NGA quickly in the coming weeks.

The other major news this week is the drought figures. Following significant rainfall in December and February, the latest figures have dramatically dropped to just 7.2% of the State in drought. Whilst this is obviously fantastic news, the 50% marginal status for many shows just how delicate the situation actually is for many of us. I know there are concerns out there that the rains may have already eased. It is a situation we are all watching very carefully.

We have also had some calls to the Association from people concerned about what this change will mean for their Exceptional Circumstances assistance. I do want to clarify that the NSW Government drought figures only impact on state assistance, such as the drought transport subsidies. There is no immediate impact on Federal EC assistance.

Next week I will be travelling around the southern part of the State and look forward to meeting with Members. I hope to meet as many of you as I can, particularly at [Nimmitabel](#) on Tuesday night when I visit with the Minister for Primary Industries, Steve Whan.

Until next fortnight,  
Charles Armstrong

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