

Media Release



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Social impact of drought: Farmers welcome findings and call for long-term strategies

The NSW Farmers' Association has welcomed the final report from the Federal Government's review of the social impacts of drought, released today by Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon. Tony Burke.

NSW Farmers' Association President Jock Laurie is pleased with the findings, saying that the Expert Social Panel had undertaken a thorough assessment of the social impacts of drought on farming families and rural communities.

"The social toll of drought cannot be underestimated," Mr Laurie said.

"Farmers, farming families and rural communities continue to face incredible hardships and uncertainties: the prospect of failed crops and relationships, the impact on mental health and physical wellbeing, the loss of support services, the lack of education and training.

"The Report reinforces our view that we need a proactive long-term plan for supporting rural industries and communities, so that they are prepared for, and can cope with, inevitable future periods of drought.

"We particularly agree with the Report's recommendation that a transition strategy be implemented to provide Government investment when current drought declarations have finished, and welcome this long-term thinking from the Panel," Mr Laurie said.

The Association lodged a detailed submission to the Expert Social Panel on Drought during the review and participated in the public forums held in NSW.

The Association put forward a range of recommendations aimed at addressing the ongoing challenges facing education and training, community development and sustainability, families, employment and professional development, mental and physical health, and social support services in rural areas.

"The Expert Social Panel report is one component of the National Drought Policy Review being undertaken by the Federal Government, and we eagerly await the Government's response," Mr Laurie said.

"One of the Panel's recommendations is that governments be committed to a strong, healthy, vibrant and sustainable rural Australia. We couldn't agree more with this recommendation and we look forward to discussing this and future drought policy with the Federal and State Government," concluded Mr Laurie.

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