

Dear Members

This will be my last email for the year, and as such I thought I might get a little reflective.



In 2009 we have seen some real wins for farmers, and ongoing achievements. There have also been challenges: drought figures rose to hit 80%, flood water rose on the north coast and we currently have over 50 fires burning across NSW.

The good news for our ongoing lobbying for effective support in drought is that last week we had the Premier Kristina Keneally, the Minister for Primary Industries Steve Whan and Minister for Water Phil Costa out and about in rural and regional NSW.

You may have already heard me repeat one thing the Premier said: *"You don't get a sense of the impact it is having on the farmers until you talk to them."* I'm repeating this because it highlights exactly why it is significant your Association organised this trip, especially so quickly after the Premier and Primary Industries Minister were appointed. Without these decision makers seeing our reality, and talking with us, we can't get effective change. We will continue to lobby for real change in 2010.

While it will hopefully rain in 2010, innovation in weather forecast technology and greater data collection from more rural areas is also, hopefully, something to look out for. The NexGen Forecast & Warning System from the Bureau of Meteorology is expected to provide more meaningful and detailed forecast services to the Australian community and I know we are looking forward to improvements when delivered in mid 2010.

Our sector has successfully hurdled a number of obstacles in the past 12 months. The proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme was the biggest challenge of all. There were so many flaws in the proposed scheme and we were very concerned that the farming sector would end up shouldering Australia's emissions target.

We worked tirelessly to illustrate this to Government and agriculture's exemption from the scheme was a win for all of us. But the battle is not over yet. Australians have shown they want action on climate change. We need to ensure that any scheme targets the appropriate industries and takes into account the huge amount of carbon that farmers naturally store and sequester.

There is much more I could say, but I'll conclude in the interest of brevity.

I wish you an enjoyable festive season. We will continue lobbying for you to improve the business environment for farming in 2010.

Merry Christmas,  
Charles Armstrong

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