



# **The Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP**

## **Minister for Primary Industries**

## **Minister for Small Business**

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### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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13 April 2011

## **HODGKINSON COMMENDS RURAL SUPPORT PROGRAM**

While visiting the Department of Primary Industries in Orange today, Minister for Primary Industries Katrina Hodgkinson praised the highly respected Rural Support Program.

“From one end of the State to the other, drought support workers – now known as Rural Support Workers – have helped thousands and thousands of families through tough times,” Katrina Hodgkinson said.

“Today, I am pleased to state that the NSW Government believes Rural Support Workers are doing a wonderful job helping farmers through to recovery and building resilience in our communities.

“The program provides important advice just like the Department’s livestock officers and district agronomists.

“I want to see regional staff out on the ground working with regional communities, not sitting behind a desk.”

Minister Hodgkinson said that currently 100 per cent of NSW is declared satisfactory and the season is shaping up to be a good one, with the winter cropping season just around the corner and lamb and beef prices strong.

“The NSW Government is honouring its pre-election commitment to support this valuable program which assists farmers still trying to rebuild after being crushed by almost a decade of drought,” she said.

“Ongoing support remains important during the recovery phase as the prospects for many farmers remain on a knife’s-edge.

“Under Labor and former Primary Industries Minister Steve Whan, Rural Support Workers were left unsure about their future at the first spot of rain.

“The NSW Liberals & Nationals Government understands that for farmers to return to profitability, they will need the ongoing support and advice provided by the Rural Support Program.”

Ms Hodgkinson said the Rural Support Program would also help farm families and rural communities build greater resilience to help them cope with natural disasters such as floods, storms, bushfires and pest incursions.

“Whenever emergencies like floods and fires have hit rural areas, support workers have always been at the frontline providing immediate assistance, and this will continue,” she said.

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