



# Govt gives \$54m for rural counselling

06:01 AEST Wed May 4 2011

**Cash-strapped farmers will continue to have access to free financial advice under a \$54.9 million pledge in next week's federal budget.**

Agriculture Minister Joe Ludwig made the pre-budget announcement on Wednesday, extending Rural Financial Counselling Services (RFCS) for another four years.

Under the scheme, counsellors are on hand to help struggling farmers figure out their financial options, negotiate with lenders and provide advice on government assistance schemes.

Senator Ludwig said it was an essential service that must be continued.

"Australia's farmers and food producers face an increasingly complex mix of challenges, from droughts and floods to pest and disease threats and resources constraints," he said in a statement.

The government was committed to helping farmers and their families overcome these hurdles, he said.

The \$54.9 million boost, to be outlined in the May 10 budget, includes \$13.3 million in funding for 2011/12, with the remainder to be spent from 2012/13 to 2014/15.

Last financial year, more than 10,200 people accessed the counselling service, which has only 119 counsellors

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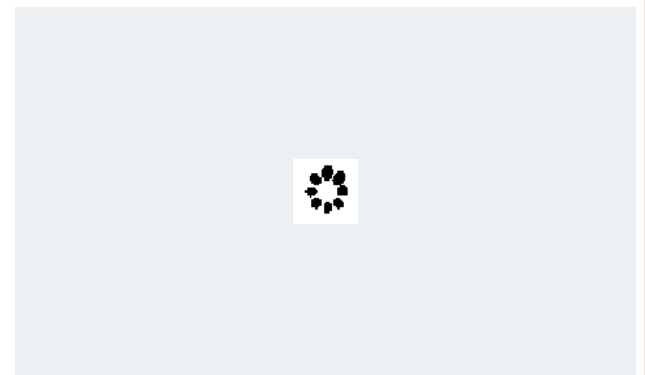


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"Rural financial counsellors will have a busy time ahead, helping farmers assess the health of their businesses and plan for their future as they recover from the drought and the recent floods," Senator Ludwig said.

For more information on RFCS, visit [www.rfcs.gov.au](http://www.rfcs.gov.au)

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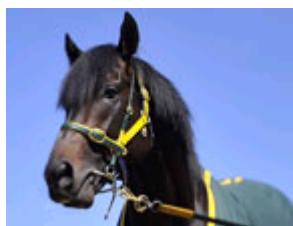
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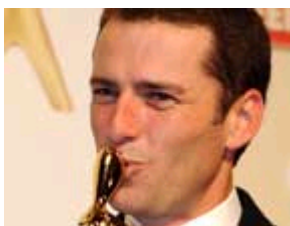
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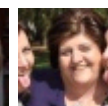
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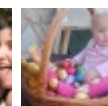
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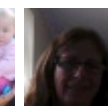
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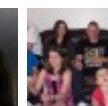
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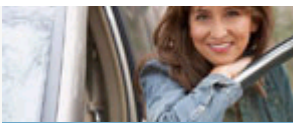
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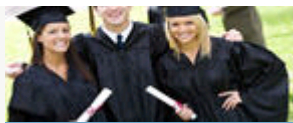
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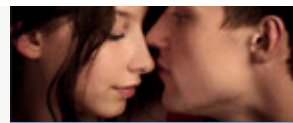
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