



\$6.7 MILLION DROUGHT ASSISTANCE EXTENSION

Thursday 24 June, 2010

Drought affected areas of the State will be given further support by the NSW Government with the extension of a \$6.7 million drought assistance package.

Premier Kristina Keneally today announced the drought assistance measures, including an extension to the employment of drought support workers for a further 12 months, rather than the usual six month extension.

The *Farm Family Gatherings and Drought Support Workshops* will also continue until at least 30 June 2011.

To date, there have been more than 3,100 Farm Family Gatherings and Drought Workshops, with more than 152,000 participants.

Other drought support measures extended for qualifying rural businesses include:

- 50 per cent drought transport subsidy until 30 September 2010; and
- Payroll tax relief for 2010/11

The NSW Government also announced the 75 per cent waiver on Western Land Lease Annual Rents will continue in the next financial year 2010-11.

“Despite signs of recent improvements in drought conditions across NSW, many parts of the State continue to face drought,” Ms Keneally said.

“More than half the State remains in drought or on the brink of drought declarations, and water supplies are still low as we head into winter months.”

“In May 2010, 9.4 per cent of NSW was drought declared with a further 49.1 per cent marginal.

“The \$6.7 million extension of all current financial and social support measures available to farmers and other rural businesses will give farmers the support they need to rebuild their lives and businesses.

“This is about helping our regional communities get back on their feet – many who have endured up to nine years of drought.”

The NSW Government will also continue its 75 per cent waiver on Western lands rents. Western Division covers around 32.5 million hectares or 42 per cent of the State.

“As of May 2010, more than half of the NSW drought declarations in the Western Division were considered marginal,” Ms Keneally said.

“This is despite widespread rains throughout the division, flooding in the northern areas and southern sections of the region having had the best autumn break in 20 years.”

However, dust storms in the spring of 2009 resulted in almost all stock being removed from the north-west quarter of the Western Division.

Minister for Primary Industries, Steve Whan, said although drought conditions had eased, and recent rains have improved seasonal conditions, this has not yet resulted in widespread financial relief for our farmers.

“It is clear that farmers across the State continue to experience severe financial hardship due to the drought,” Mr Whan said.

“If the forecast average rainfall in marginal areas does not occur over winter, drought will return.

“It could be up to three years before optimum production levels are reached by most landholders, if reasonable seasonal conditions continue.

“The impact of nine years drought continues to cause significant financial and social hardship across the State.

“The NSW Government will continue to provide support to those most affected in areas where it is most needed.”