



**NEW DROUGHT FIGURES PAINT BLEAK PICTURE
AS PREMIER VISITS AFFECTED AREAS**

Sunday, 13 December 2009

Premier Kristina Keneally will tour drought-affected NSW today and tomorrow as new figures show more than 80 per cent of NSW is now officially in drought, with seven more regions moving into drought.

In total, more than 95 per cent of NSW is either in drought or considered marginally in drought.

The last time over 80 per cent of the State was drought declared was more than two years ago, in November 2007.

The latest official figures reveal 80.8 per cent of the State is now drought declared (up from 73.6 per cent in October), with 14.8 per cent considered marginal (down from 24.5 per cent), while only 4.4 per cent is satisfactory (up from 1.9 per cent).

Over the coming days, Ms Keneally will visit Armidale, Bundarra, Wyangala Dam and Cowra with Minister for Primary Industries & Rural Affairs Steve Whan and President of the NSW Farmers Association Charles Armstrong.

“These figures paint a very bleak picture for farmers and it’s likely to get worse with this summer expected to be the worst in years,” Mr Whan said.

“Rain is desperately needed over the Christmas/New Year period to replenish water supplies that are close to running out in many regions.

“Conditions are so bad that I understand some honey producers in central NSW may have to soon resort to sugar feeding to keep bee colonies alive until autumn, while farmers are carting water and supplementary feeding to keep livestock alive.

“The NSW Government has committed more than \$500 million in assistance measures since the drought began in 2002 and will continue to support farmers until the drought breaks.”

Minister Whan said the harvest is around 95 per cent complete across the State and it was the earliest finish on record in many districts.

“Low grain prices and market uncertainties have seen a large percentage of harvested grain either stored on farms or warehoused,” Mr Whan said.

“Storm rainfall over the last month has been varied and patchy, with the central and central northern areas only receiving up to 10mm, while a small area on the mid-north coast flooded.

“For example Grafton received 102 millimetres, Cowra received 50 mm, Yass received 55 mm and Broken Hill received 16mm over the last month.

“The total water storage level is 29.3% of total storage capacity, down 1.7% on last month.

“Let’s hope the new year brings more rain and a change in fortune for our farmers, who have had another tough twelve months with crop failures and reduced prices due to the global financial crisis.”

NEW DECLARATIONS (moved into drought)

Central West LHPA	Part of District moved from marginal to drought (Whole District now drought)
Cumberland LHPA	Part of District moved from marginal to drought
Darling LHPA	Part of District moved from marginal to drought
Mid-Coast LHPA	Part of District moved from marginal to drought
New England LHPA	Part of District moved from marginal to drought
North West LHPA	Part of District moved from marginal to drought (Whole District now drought)
Tablelands LHPA	Part of District moved from marginal to drought

**LHPA (Livestock Health and Pest Authorities)

REVOCATIONS (moved out of drought)

Nil

ALTERATIONS (moved between marginal and satisfactory)

DECLINED (satisfactory to marginal)

Tablelands LHPA	Part of District moved from satisfactory to marginal
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IMPROVED (marginal to satisfactory)

Mid-Coast LHPA	Part of District moved from marginal to satisfactory
North Coast LHPA	Part of District moved from marginal to satisfactory