



The Hon Jaala Pulford MP

Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Regional Development

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Kel Tori
Chief Executive Officer
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Dear Mr Tori *Kel*

RELIEF OPTIONS FOR DROUGHT AFFECTED FARMERS

Thank you for your letter about relief options for drought affected farmers. The Victorian Government is aware of the challenges currently faced by farmers across Victoria. I am pleased to have had the opportunity to visit affected areas of the state in recent weeks and meet with a range of farmers and organisations to hear first-hand what government could do to assist.

Agriculture Victoria is delivering workshops and providing information to support farmers make informed decisions. In response to seasonal conditions, my department has already conducted over 60 farmer workshops, with a further 14 planned in the coming weeks. These workshops focus on supporting farmers to make decisions, exploring supplementary feeding options, managing pastures, soil and water, maintaining wellbeing and where to access further support.

Agriculture Victoria is also providing one-on-one consultations to assist farmers directly.

The Rural Financial Counselling Service provides free, independent and confidential assistance to farmers. Rural financial counsellors work one-on-one with farmers to help analyse their business, identify financial and business options, develop an action plan, negotiate with creditors and access government assistance. The Rural Financial Counselling Service can be contacted on 1800 686 175.

Australian Government financial assistance available to farmers includes the Farm Household Allowance (FHA) and Farm Investment and Drought Loans.



On 12 September 2018, the Victorian Government announced an additional \$5 million in funding as the next stage in supporting farmers affected by drought conditions in Central and East Gippsland. This funding will also support farmers in Northern and North West Victoria where 2018 rainfall has been significantly below average.

The increased support includes:

- \$1.4 million for Drought Infrastructure Grants in Central and East Gippsland
- \$1.2 million for a Drought Employment Program in Central and East Gippsland through the Catchment Management Authorities
- \$1 million for technical and decision-making support for farmers in Central and East Gippsland, Northern and North West Victoria
- \$0.4 million for the Look Over the Farm Gate program in Central and East Gippsland and Northern and North West Victoria
- \$0.5 million for a drought coordinator in Gippsland and Drought Preparedness Coordinators in Northern and North West Victoria
- \$0.5 million for a Community Resilience Program in Central and East Gippsland.

These support measures complement other assistance that is already available.

Further information about support for farmers is available at www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/dryseasons or contact our Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

I continue to monitor conditions across Victoria and work closely with stakeholders. The Victorian Government is committed to providing effective and appropriate responses that meet farmers' needs.

I trust that this information has assisted in answering your concerns.

Yours sincerely



Hon Jaala Pulford MP
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Date: 19/10/2018