



Country Women's Association of NSW

*Incorporated in 1931 by an Act of NSW Parliament
Constituent Society of the Associated Country Women of the World*

ABN 82 318 909 926

26 June 2014

Open Letter

To: Federal Treasurer, Joe Hockey and Federal Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce and NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson

From: President of the CSW of NSW, Ms Tanya Cameron

Dear Ministers,

I write on behalf of the members of the Country Women's Association of NSW and would like to express our dismay and concern at the reported shortfall in funds for the Emergency Water Rebate Scheme.

The sheer popularity of this program, alone, should be an enormous indicator of just how great the need is in areas affected by drought, for producers to ensure their stock have access to a clean, reliable water source.

The impact of this shortfall will be far-reaching and will not only impact on the budgets of farm businesses but also struggling small businesses who supply the agricultural industry around them and who, along with their communities, were also seeing the benefits of this scheme.

The issue that concerns us most is how people will cope. Producers who have outlaid money they do not have, on a promise from government. Small business owners carrying credit they can't afford, on a promise from government.

We have heard time and again the catch-cry at all levels of government, that they want to support viable producers to ensure they are prepared for future droughts and we now have the situation where many of those producers will have taken the steps to help ensure their future is viable, only to find a proverbial "hole in the bucket". Preparedness could not predict the suddenness and severity of this drought. Watering points that have never failed in the past have done so this time. A valuable lesson learned and one that producers were acting on, in good faith, to ensure it never happened again.

It is imperative to ensure that, at the very least, successful applications received by 30th June 2014 be funded.

I would also like to comment on another broken promise in NSW - the waiver of Local Land Services rates to producers in drought affected areas, announced in February, which has now been reduced to 50% for six months.

The Chairman of Local Land Services John Macarthur-Stanham on ABC Rural (16/6/2014) was quoted as saying the waivers were an impost on Treasury and tax payers and that “people have also got to look at the glass as being half full, rather than being on the half empty side.”

It is pretty hard to expect a positive attitude from people whose budgets are showing bracketed figures for the foreseeable future.

It's bad enough to recognise and try to understand that there are no avenues for assistance, but to be promised help and then have that taken away, has a completely different effect on your ability to cope. I fear that these broken promises could be the 'straw that breaks the camel's back' for some producers.

A promise is a promise and we call on the State and Federal Governments to keep them.

Ends

For further information and to arrange an interview with Tanya Cameron please contact:

Emily Bowman

P. 02 6766 5222 or 0428 261 774