

Farmer Assistance Update: Stuart Brummell, Rural Financial Counsellor

September 2014

Drought Concessional Loans: Drought Concessional Loans are now available to assist farm businesses recover from and prepare for future droughts and return to viability in the longer term. Under the scheme, the Australian Government will provide New South Wales with \$100 million for the provision of Drought Concessional Loans in 2013-14 and 2014-15. (\$25 million already allocated by early Sept.) The availability of loans is subject to funds being available. Some of the scheme guidelines are as follows;

- a maximum loan term of five years
- loan amounts will be up to 50 per cent of total eligible debt to a maximum of \$1 million
- a variable concessional interest rate initially set at 4 per cent

The scheme will close on **30 June 2015**, or earlier if funds are fully committed

<http://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/assistance/drought-concessional-loans>

Farm innovation fund loans: Concessional loans are now available from the NSW Rural Assistance Authority to assist with drought preparedness, environment, farm infrastructure and natural resources works. Up to 20 year terms, current interest rate is 2.5% which is fixed for the term of the loan.

<http://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/assistance/farm-innovation-fund>

Deferral of repayments on NSW Rural Assistance Authority loans is also available to farmers who have existing loans with the RAA, and are in financial hardship due to drought conditions.

<http://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/assistance/other>

Farm Finance Concessional Loans scheme is administered by the NSW Rural Assistance Authority and provides loans of up to \$650,000 to refinance up to half of existing long term borrowings for farmers in financial difficulty and who are considered to be viable long term. This scheme is now open for applications. There has been \$50 million allocated to this scheme in the 2014/2015 financial year. Applications are allocated in order of receipt.

<http://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/assistance/farm-finance-package>

NSW Rural Assistance Authority ph. 1800 678 593 - 02 6391 3000

Enterprise Action Plans: Rural Financial Counsellors undertake Enterprise Action Plans for their clients which allow farmers to review their financial position, develop cash flow budgets and projections, analyse the financial and business performance of the farm enterprise, benchmark the farm enterprise against standard farm business financial and operating ratios, develop strategies and options that are appropriate to your farm enterprise's business structure, plan to manage risk including climate risk and identify where you might need to obtain professional advice and other government assistance. The Enterprise Action Plan assists farmers to gain an improved understanding of their circumstances by reviewing their current financial situation and working through their available options.

<http://www.rfcsnsw-northernregion.org/enterprise-action-plan.html>

Income Support for Farmers:

Farm Household Allowance: The Farm Household Allowance (FHA) will help farmers with their daily living expenses, and is available to farmers Australia wide, **without** the need for a drought declaration. This allowance will be available from 1st July 2014 and provide eligible farmers and their partners up to three years of income support. This payment is equivalent to the Newstart Allowance and is paid fortnightly. Recipients will be supported by case managers as they undertake activities to improve their situation and prepare for the future. The new allowance will replace the Exceptional Circumstances Relief Payment and the Transitional Farm Family Payment. Farmer's who have already received the twelve month payment under the Transitional Farm Family Payment, may also be able to apply for FHA.

Dept. Human Service - Drought and Farmer Assistance Hotline 13 23 16

<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/farm-household-allowance>

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