



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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The Facts on EC for Armidale & Northern New England RLPB Areas

Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor, has moved to clarify misinformation about eligibility for Exceptional Circumstance assistance for New England farmers and graziers.

Mr Windsor has received many calls from drought-affected farmers who have been getting mixed messages relating to the eligibility of certain areas for EC support.

The following facts need to be understood :-

1. That portion of the Northern New England Rural Lands Protection Board (RLPB) north of the Bruxner Highway has been declared as eligible for full Exceptional Circumstance (EC) assistance.
2. The balance of the Northern New England RLPB and the Armidale RLPB areas are eligible for Interim Exceptional Circumstance assistance but not full EC assistance YET.

“Due to the criteria, as laid down by the Federal Government, that certain rainfall criteria be reached before full EC could be applied for, the Armidale RLPB and the southern portion of the New England RLPB have not been eligible until 1st February 2003.

An application for full EC is currently being prepared and is expected to be completed and forwarded to the National Rural Advisory Council (the independent reviewer of EC applications) within 2 weeks for assessment,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor is also aware that the NSW Minister for Agriculture, Richard Amery had written to the Federal Minister Warren Truss requesting that normal delays involved with an EC application be waived in view of the rainfall and climatic statistics.

“The rainfall and climatic statistics show a frightening situation with many producers facing the prospect of having to de-stock because of failing water supplies.

I hope that the Federal Minister will look favourably at streamlining the latest EC applications as many producers needed certainty for the future in relation to maintaining core flocks and herds as winter approaches.

Given that all applications that have been made by NSW Agriculture that have abided by the rainfall criteria have been accepted by the Federal Government, it should be logical that a 2-3 month wait for approval could be avoided with the new applications for EC.

This would get help to those in need much more quickly and maximise their survival chances,” Mr Windsor said.