



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Loss of EC Drought assistance to North West farmers to be reviewed**

Farmers who lost their Exceptional Circumstance Drought assistance in the Central North North –West Region of NSW may have their position reviewed according to correspondence received by Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor from the Minister for Agriculture today.

Mr Windsor has made many representations to the Minister, the Hon Peter McGauran on behalf of affected farmers still experiencing drought conditions but having been excluded from receiving Exceptional Circumstance support as of July 22.

“The Minister for Agriculture, Peter McGauran has indicated in his letter that he had ‘written to the NSW Minister for Primary Industries seeking additional information to support an extension of the Exceptional Circumstances assistance and to identify which areas or industries should be reassessed’ and that he ‘will give the case prompt and objective consideration upon receipt of this supporting documentation.’” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor said that the Minister had indicated in his letter that in June this year, the National Rural Advisory Council (NRAC) reviewed the Central North North West EC declared region as part of the Australian Government’s streamlined rollover process for an extension of assistance.

The Minister said “In its review, the Council (NRAC) considered up-to-date seasonal and economic information to determine whether conditions in the region allowed producers to continue or recommence recovery. The Council (NRAC) also toured the region in June meeting with local producers and assessing on-ground conditions.

The Minister went on to say in his letter, “Information provided to the Council (NRAC) indicated that seasonal conditions favourable to production throughout 2005 had provided some producers with the opportunity to start returning to typical farm operations. Based on this evidence, the Council (NRAC) concluded that an extension of assistance for the Central North North West region as a whole was not warranted. However, the Council (NRAC) acknowledged that the rate of recovery across the EC declared region was not uniform and that variable seasonal conditions in late summer and autumn had limited the recovery of some producers in certain areas of the EC declared region.”

Mr Windsor believes that the response from the Minister is a positive step in reinstating EC assistance to those still genuinely in need of that assistance.

“The Minister’s request for further information from the State Government is a positive step in having the initial decision not to rollover EC for the entire region at least reviewed.

I urge the NSW Minister for Primary Industries to provide the additional information requested by the Federal Minister for Agriculture as quickly as possible so that those farmers still genuinely in need of EC assistance can access its benefits before it’s too late,” Mr Windsor said.

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