



The Hon Niall Blair MLC Minister for Primary Industries Minister for Lands and Water

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 1 May 2015

ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR FLOOD-AFFECTED FARMERS

Minister for Primary Industries, Niall Blair, today urged farmers affected by recent devastation in the Hunter Valley and Central Coast to take advantage of low-interest loans as part of the Rural Assistance Authority's Natural Disaster Relief Scheme.

Mr Blair said assistance was now available for primary producers and small businesses in the local government areas of Cessnock, Dungog, Gosford, Great Lakes, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Newcastle, Pittwater, Port Stephens, Singleton, Warringah and Wyong.

"This has been a testing time for the communities right across the Hunter and the NSW Government is doing everything it can to make sure these communities get back on their feet," Mr Blair said.

"Through the Rural Assistance Authority's Natural Disaster Relief Scheme, low-interest loans up to \$130,000 are available to primary producers for replacement and repair of damage not covered by insurance, and for working capital required due to loss of income."

"This includes structural repairs to sheds, fences, access roads and other infrastructure damaged by the storms and floods.

"Transport subsidies are also available to assist with the cost of transporting fodder and livestock on flood-affected properties.

"The Rural Assistance Authority is available to take calls immediately and staff will be working over the weekend to answer the phone."

Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter Scot McDonald said: "Rural Resilience Officers and Rural Support Workers are on hand to provide information on support to aid farming communities recovering from a natural disaster and link farmers to service providers."

Member for Upper Hunter Michael Johnsen said: "While the RAA is providing financial assistance to aid recovery efforts, over the past 10 days the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Local Land Services staff have been delivering fodder, rescuing stranded stock and disposing of dead stock.

For more information on the financial support available, affected farmers and small business owners should contact the **Rural Assistance Authority** on **1800 678 593**.

With predictions for more heavy rain and storms in coming days, DPI is urging flood-affected landholders in the Hunter and Central Coast to report storm damage as soon as possible by phoning the **DPI Agriculture and Emergency Hotline 1800 814 647**.

Farmers requiring assistance with disposal of dead livestock are also urged to contact the hotline for advice.