



# The Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP

## Minister for Primary Industries

## Minister for Small Business

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### MEDIA RELEASE

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Friday, 11 November 2011

#### HELPING HAND FOR BATLOW PRODUCERS

Producers in the Batlow region can now apply for natural disaster assistance to help repair damage caused by a severe hailstorm on 9 November, Minister for Primary Industries Katrina Hodgkinson said today.

“The Batlow area has been declared an Agricultural Natural Disaster area,” Katrina Hodgkinson said.

“The severe hailstorm was one of the worst in living memory and caused more than \$26 million in damage and losses.

“About 30 properties were impacted and the storm resulted in widespread damage to orchard infrastructure, hail nets, roadways and other property infrastructure.

“Those affected are urged to apply for assistance via the NSW Rural Assistance Authority (RAA).

“The assistance comes in the form of loans of up to \$130,000, at 2.77 per cent interest per annum, with a two year interest and payment free period. The loans provide for replacement or repairs to property and infrastructure, including damage to orchard crops,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

Member for Wagga Wagga, Daryl Maguire acknowledged the swift work of the Rural Assistance Authority to meet the needs of the Batlow community.

“Affected landholders in the Batlow region can now apply for Agricultural Natural Disaster Relief Assistance through the RAA,” Mr Maguire said.

“The storm has affected more than nine million kilograms of apples, wiped out close to \$14 million from this year’s harvest and is likely to result in a \$12 million loss of production over the next two years.

“The impact of the storm is likely to be felt right across the community for some time. It will affect the demand for seasonal pickers, packers and pruning workers.

“However, because of the sheer scale of this storm, it is clear that more social and community support assistance will be required for farm families, farm workers and farm-reliant businesses that have been or will be affected, either directly or indirectly,” Mr Maguire said.

To clarify eligibility criteria or any other issues relating to this assistance, potential applicants can contact the RAA toll-free on 1800 678 593 or visit [www.raa.nsw.gov.au](http://www.raa.nsw.gov.au)