



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

MEDIA RELEASE

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LONG ROAD TO FLOOD RECOVERY

Minister for Primary Industries Niall Blair has toured the flood-affected Hunter region to see recovery efforts firsthand, as estimates for the agricultural damage bill exceed \$100 million.

The Minister also met with Local Land Services and Department of Primary Industries staff to thank them for their tireless efforts in the aftermath of the floods.

Mr Blair said while the scale of the damage was widespread – impacting beef, dairy and poultry farmers, the horticultural sector, turf producers, commercial fishers and oyster farmers – the resilience of those in the region was remarkable.

“This event was a huge blow to our farmers and producers, many of whom have generations of experience in dealing with floods,” Mr Blair said.

“This recovery is not going to be quick, but I am confident that with the support available, and the resilience of those on land, people are getting back on their feet.”

Member for Upper Hunter Michael Johnsen said the areas hardest hit included Dungog, Stroud, Maitland and Port Stephens, as well as parts of Singleton, Cessnock, Great Lakes and Gosford council areas.

“The Department of Primary Industries and Local Land Services have been working tirelessly, on the ground, in the Local Coordination Centre and in the air, with landholders and farmers to rescue stock, drop fodder and provide emergency assistance,” Mr Johnsen said.

“This work is ongoing and these agencies are still on hand, along with staff from the Rural Assistance Authority, to help guide and assist those affected.”

A suite of assistance measures are in place to help farmers and producers get back on their feet, with a range of financial, administration and emotional assistance available.

To access disaster assistance, low interest loans and transport subsidies, farmers and small businesses should contact the **Rural Assistance Authority** on **1800 678 593**.

Farmers can continue to report damage or request assistance, including fodder, via the **DPI Hotline** on **1800 814 647**. Rural Resilience Officers and Rural Support Workers continue to help farmers access support and deal with the emotional toll of this disaster.

The floods caused extensive and significant losses to farm infrastructure including more than 7400 kilometres of fencing needing to be repaired or replaced.

Almost all oyster growers in the Port Stephens and Brisbane Waters areas were affected with extensive stock losses and infrastructure damage, as well as damage to commercial fishing boats and equipment and more than 1000 head of cattle were lost.

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Work undertaken by the Department of Primary Industries and Local Land Services:

- Responded to 148 requests for assistance.
- Distributed 20 tonnes of emergency fodder.
- 40 helicopter sorties to stranded stock and three days using flood boats.
- Fodder supply to 1800 cattle, and 480 horses
- Helicopter support to ferry food to 50,000 stranded chickens.
- Disposal of more than 500 dead livestock.
- Aerial surveys undertaken.
- Assisted with missing and found stock.
- Moved stock out of floodwaters.
- Established small animal holding facilities at key evacuation centres.
- Established and staffed four recovery centres.

Work undertaken by Hunter Water:

- 50,000 bottles of water delivered to customers, who were without drinking water
- 6,000 man hours spent repairing the trunk main supplying water from Chichester Dam
- \$300,000 spent to sample water to ensure water was safe at all times to drink
- Reconnected 10,000 properties, who experienced a water outage as a result of storm damage
- More than 1200 emergency calls alone in the 24 hours after the storm hit