The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP
Minister for Agriculture

The Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson
NSW Minister for Primary Industries

M E D I A R E L E A S E

20 June 2014

Applications open for NSW drought concessional loans

From today, eligible farmers in New South Wales who are experiencing financial hardship from drought can apply for a concessional loan under the Drought Concessional Loans Scheme to help them cope with the current conditions and recover when conditions improve.

Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce, and NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson, announced the roll out of the scheme in NSW today, demonstrating the commitment of the Australian and NSW Governments to ensuring loans will flow to where they are needed.

"Australia-wide we're providing $280 million for concessional loans to assist drought-affected farm businesses," Minister Joyce said.

"I said we would deliver a loans package for farmers struggling with the drought in NSW – and we've delivered. I am pleased that $100 million in drought loans will now start flowing to NSW farmers."

Ms Hodgkinson said the loans have a concessional loan term of five years at an initial interest rate of four per cent, and they will be for up to 50 per cent of eligible farm business debt, to a maximum of $1 million.

“Following receipt of the final guidelines from the Commonwealth earlier this month, I have worked hard to ensure relevant NSW Government regulatory approvals were met to get these loans out to farmers as quickly as possible,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

“I have today received that final approval, allowing the applications to open on the NSW Rural Assistance Authority website.

"The loans will help those experiencing drought to restructure their existing business debt at a lower concessional interest rate.

"They can also be used to meet ongoing business running costs and fund drought recovery and preparedness activities.”

Minister Joyce said applications for concessional loans opened in Queensland earlier this month, and work continues to roll out the scheme in other jurisdictions.

"So far, we've given $200 million for Drought Concessional Loans to the NSW and Queensland Governments and we continue to work closely with Western Australia and the Northern Territory to finalise delivery arrangements in those jurisdictions," Minister Joyce said.

Minister Joyce and Minister Hodgkinson encourage farmers not to self-assess, but to seek help and find out what's available.

For information on how to apply, visit www.raa.nsw.gov.au or phone 1800 678 593.

For further information on assistance available to farmers, visit daff.gov.au/assistance and www.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/emergency/drought.