MEDIA RELEASE

3 May 2019

## South Australian farmers urged to sit down with drought support providers

South Australian farmers, farm workers, farm contractors and suppliers in drought-affected areas can obtain help with accessing federal, state and local support services thanks to a series of outreach events being coordinated by the Australian Government.

Assistant Director of the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities’ Drought Taskforce, Dale Sheridan, said locals would have the opportunity to sit down for one-on-one discussions with representatives from the Commonwealth and South Australian governments, farm business advisers, mental health support organisations and charities.

“The aim is to provide tailored advice about accessing immediate and longer term support to help people manage their financial affairs, farm businesses and health challenges during and after the drought,” Ms Sheridan said.

“There is a vast range of support measures available, which includes financial assistance, tax assistance, small business coaching, tools to assist farm-related decision making and information about local mental health support services.

“Farmers who attended the events across NSW and Victoria were surprised about the extent of financial support they were actually eligible for, leaving attendees feeling much more optimistic after obtaining advice about measures they previously weren’t aware of.”

Rural Business Support (RBS) CEO Brett Smith said the not-for-profit organisation’s team of experienced Rural Financial Counsellors would be available to help producers make strategic business decisions.

“Our RFC’s can help producers take a big picture look at their unique business situation and present proactive options to ensure they are making affordable, informed decisions about the way forward,” Mr Smith said.

“RBS can also assist farming families with applying for government assistance under programs like the Farm Household Allowance and prepare for meetings with banks.”

**Some of the government agencies and organisations attending are:**

The Department of Human Services: Farm Household Case Officers from the Department will be on-hand to provide information on the Farm Household Allowance (FHA) and offer advice on other Centrelink payments and services people may be eligible for. Those who are not already receiving FHA have until 1 June 2019 to apply for the lump sum payment of up to $6,000 per household.

The Australian Tax Office (ATO): ATO representatives will provide advice on tax and superannuation assistance measures available to all drought-affected individuals and small businesses across regional Australia. This includes help with interest-free payment plans, adjusting instalments, waiving penalties and more. Assistance is available to any individual or business that is impacted by the drought (not only primary producers).

Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA): PIRSA staff, along with mentors from the Family and Business (FaB) Support Program, will be available to provide advice and support on accessing the range of drought support measures provided by the South Australian Government, including the On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate.

Natural Resources SA: Staff will be on-hand to provide advice about the management and conservation of natural resources.

Rural Business Support (RBS): Any primary producers concerned about the financial impacts of the drought, or reduced access to irrigation water, can discuss these and other business issues with representatives of RBS’s free Rural Financial Counselling Service. Rural Financial Counsellors can also provide support with applications for the Farm Household Allowance, Drought Assistance Funds and Drought Concessional Loans.

The Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul: Representatives from both charities will distribute grants provided under the Australian Government’s Drought Community Support Initiative, which provides up to $3,000 ($2,000 in cash and $1,000 in vouchers) to eligible farmers, farm workers and suppliers/contractors living or working in one of South Australia’s 22 drought-declared areas.

NBN Co: NBN Local will be available to discuss how the rollout of broadband services in regional South Australia is helping farmers and rural businesses to find and access new markets and improve their overall productivity.

Small Business Coaching: Small business coaches will be available to help provide local farmers and other business people with advice on a range of issues crucial to ensuring they can survive the drought. At each event, 10 local small businesses can access a free 15-minute coaching sessions on the day, and 12 local small businesses can schedule a free 30-minute session with a business coach who has an in-depth understanding of the challenges facing local businesses.

Mental health support organisations: Information will be available about local mental health support services.

For more information about the drought outreach events or Commonwealth drought support measures, please visit: <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/outreach>

Queries about South Australia’s drought assistance measures can be directed to the Drought Hotline on 1800 255 556 or the South Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regions’ Drought Hub at [pir.sa.gov.au/drought](https://pir.sa.gov.au/drought)

**Contact for more information:**

media@infrastructure.gov.au | 1300 732 749

**Itinerary**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Murray Bridge | Tuesday 7 May | Murray Bridge Club, 1 Murray Cods Drive | 9 – 11:30am |
| Karoonda | Tuesday 7 May | Karoonda Football Club, Karoonda Highway | 2:30 – 5pm  |
| Lameroo | Wednesday 8 May | Lameroo Memorial Hall, 63 Railway Tce St Sth | 9 – 11:30am |
| Loxton | Wednesday 8 May | Research Centre,1801 Bookpurnong Rd | 2:30 – 5pm |
| Berri | Thursday 9 May | Berri Town Hall, 19 Wilson Street | 9 – 11:30am |
| Balaklava | Tuesday 14 May | Balaklava Sports Club, Ralli Park, Balaklava Showgrounds, Werocata Road | 9 – 11:30am |
| Bute | Tuesday 14 May | Bute Town Hall, High Street | 2:30 – 5pm |
| Clare | Wednesday 15 May | Clare Golf Club, 3 Square Mile Road | 9 – 11:30am |
| Morgan | Thursday 16 May | Morgan Day Activity Centre, cnr Third and Ninth Street | 9 – 11:30am |
| Eudunda | Thursday 16 May | Eudunda District Hall, 25 Bruce Street | 2:30 – 5pm |
| Freeling | Friday 17 May | Freeling Agricultural Recreation Multi-purpose (FARM) Centre, 40 Hanson Street | 9 – 11:30am |
| Melrose | Tuesday 21 May | Melrose Institute, 1 Stuart Street | 9 – 11:30am |
| Quorn | Tuesday 21 May | Quorn Town Hall, 1 Seventh Street | 2:30 – 5pm |
| Orroroo | Wednesday 22 May | Orroroo Golf Club, 1 Second Street | 9 – 11:30am |
| Peterborough | Wednesday 22 May | Peterborough Town Hall, 108 Main Street | 2:30 – 5pm |
| Jamestown | Thursday 23 May | Jamestown Memorial Hall , 73 Ayr Street | 9 – 11:30am |
| Cowell | Monday 27 May | Franklin Harbour Institute, 8 Main Street | 2:30 – 5pm |
| Cleve | Tuesday 28 May  | Cleve Golf Club, Golf Drive | 9 – 11:30am |
| Kimba | Tuesday 28 May | Kimba Soldiers Memorial Institute, Cnr High and Cross Street | 2:30 – 5pm |
| Wudinna | Wednesday 29 May | Wudinna Community Club, 40 Medley Terrace | 9 – 11:30am |
| Streaky Bay | Thursday 30 May | Streaky Bay & Districts Community Complex, 82 Wells Street | 9 – 11:30am |
| Ceduna | Thursday 30 May | Ceduna Foreshore Hotel, 32 O'Loughlin Terrace | 2:30 – 5pm |