

Media Release

The Hon Jaala Pulford MLC
Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Regional Development
Deputy Leader of the Government
in the Legislative Council

Wednesday, 12 September, 2018

DROUGHT SUPPORT TO HELP VICTORIAN FARMERS

The Andrews Labor Government has announced additional support to ease the financial burden on Victorian farmers experiencing drought conditions.

Minister for Agriculture Jaala Pulford today outlined a further \$5 million to ensure farmers and irrigation communities have the support they need.

The funding package includes \$1.4 million for Drought Infrastructure Grants, which includes grants to help farmers face the cost of establishing areas to contain stock.

\$1.2 million will support a new *Drought Employment Program* to give drought-affected workers in the Wellington and East Gippsland shires the opportunity to earn an income off-farm by working with local Catchment Management Authorities. Workers will carry out a range of tasks, including building fences along rivers, stock control and weed management.

A million dollars will go towards technical and business support for farmers to manage financial decisions on farm, including animal health, feed budgeting and land management.

The package also includes:

- \$400,000 for the *Look Over The Farm Gate Program* to better support the mental health of farmers through community awareness workshops and events
- \$500,000 for a drought co-ordinator in Gippsland, and additional coordination effort in the northern irrigation areas and north-west Victoria
- \$500,000 for a Community Resilience Program, working with local councils to provide social events and community infrastructure
- \$400,000 to increase the Rural Financial Counselling Service

In addition, the Government has also invested \$1.8 million as a part of the Plan2Farm program to irrigators in Goulburn Murray Irrigation District to help with financial and land management decisions.

The Labor Government has invested in irrigation modernisation works, including \$40 million to expand the water grid as a part of the South West Loddon Rural Water Supply Project and \$30 million to connect towns in south Gippsland to the state's water grid as a part of the Lance Creek Pipeline Project.

Quote attributable to Minister for Agriculture Jaala Pulford

"We know some farmers are doing it tough and conditions are dry – that's why we're taking action and investing in these initiatives to give these communities the support that they need."

Quote attributable to Minister for Water Lisa Neville

"The Drought Employment Program is an opportunity for local farmers or their families to access employment options, and for real improvements to be made to the local waterways that will have a lasting impact."

Quote attributable to Member for Eastern Victoria Harriett Shing

"The impact of drought, high fodder, falling stock prices and water costs are all biting hard across Gippsland – we're supporting our farmers and their communities doing it tough and providing practical assistance and relief."

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