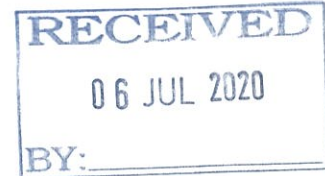


Office of the Mayor

Clr Denis Todd
Mayor
Warrumbungle Shire Council
PO Box 191
COONABARABRAN NSW 2357



1st July 2020

Dear Clr ~~Todd~~, ^{DENNIS}

Re: Federal and State Consideration of Payments to Rural Producers and the Staff in Drought.

Council at its May 2020 Meeting considered the impacts that Covid-19 is having on the National and State economy and considered these impacts against the impacts that severe drought continues to have at a social and economic level.

Council recognises that a worldwide pandemic and a need for social isolation has been required to reduce the national death toll and does not criticise the actions and steps taken to support families, communities and the economic welfare direction taken.

In Council's consideration of the impacts of drought compared to the impacts of Covid-19 at a social and economic level, it believes that if the same level of financial support was made available to farming communities during severe drought as is being provided to the Covid-19 families and communities, then the drought effected areas of the Nation would be able to maintain a greater level of job security, prevent the migration of people from small rural and remote communities to larger centres and allow the protection of the communities economic base.

At Council's 23rd April 2020 Meeting it was resolved that Council send a letter to Federal and State politicians expressing Council's concerns regarding the following:

1. *Immediately address the inequity that exists between the drought response and those of crisis.*
2. *Government actions reflect the importance of the regions and value them accordingly.*
3. *Shift focus on primary criteria and actions to those that relate to loss of income and protecting people when most vulnerable.*
4. *Safeguard and protect our resources and food security vital to all Australians.*

Council is supportive of the Federal and State Governments rapid response to boost the national economic outcome, and this is assisting to prevent a severe decline towards economic depression.

Clr Denis Todd
Mayor
Warrumbungle Shire Council
PO Box 191
COONABARABRAN NSW 2357

Our Ref: F2-2
Contact: Clr Milton Quigley
MJQ:JAB 1323

1st July 2020

Businesses will receive a fortnightly wage subsidy up to \$1,500 per employee as part of a Federal Government support to prevent millions of people from losing their jobs to the coronavirus pandemic. At the same time, rural businesses and rural families have and continue to go through drought conditions and are suffering hardship due to no crops, loss of production due to drought, sale of stock or through a shrinking customer base.

There is a level of inequity in rural areas for farming families and rural business compared to the loss of employment in other business sectors. A casual employee who cannot go to work can receive a financial subsidy that helps pay the electricity, buy food or pay rent, whilst a person who is working in a drought affected community in a rural based business or on a rural property is expected to survive on limited personal funding.

Many programs are available to farming families, unfortunately the cut off for Government support excludes many families and the business operators from applying due to the value of assets e.g. land and machinery. During drought times people cannot eat dirt or machinery and rural business cannot generate income from farmers who cannot produce crops or stock for sale. An inequity has been established that can be rectified.

To ensure that all levels of the community are funded both now and into the future, this request of the Federal Government to extend a rural based payment to rural families, and rural based business to support the day to day needs of families as is occurring during this Covid-19 pandemic will ensure social equity and provide support to rural families and the communities they live within.

Council believes that the National economic security at times of drought has a very high level of importance. As shown during the Covid-19 shut down, the National reliance on overseas companies and governments has seen everyday commodities not being available and price rises that cannot be sustained. Rural Australia, the farming families and rural companies, the rural employees, the shop assistants, doctors, nurses and education, are highly important to ensure that crops and stock are being produced at a National level without shifting our reliance on overseas producers.

Council is asking for consideration of future support being legislated to ensure that rural Australia does survive, that all farming families, producers, small business and employees are supported during drought declarations and recognisable impacts regionally are being identified, on a similar basis as the economic stimulus being offered across Australia during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Yours faithfully,



Clr Milton Quigley
Mayor