

Cameron Hutchison
Acting First Assistant Secretary
Farm Support Division
Chair
IGA Review Working Group

Berrimah Farm
Makagon Road
DARWIN NT 0828

Postal Address
GPO Box 3000
DARWIN NT 0801

T 08 899902178
E Dionne.walsh@nt.gov.au

File Ref:

Dear Cameron

Re: Intergovernmental Agreement on National Drought Program Reform

Thank you for your invitation to comment on the IGA review.

Northern Territory beef producers operate in one of the most variable rainfall environments in the world. The Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry and Resources (NT DPIR) provides a range of practical advisory services to assist beef producers with managing climate variability and drought-preparedness. These include group and individual training to increase the uptake of forage budgeting, stocking rate management and land capability assessment; advice on property development; customised climate and pasture risk modelling; and information products such as our quarterly Pastoral Feed Outlook.

With the exception of 2012/13, our most drought-prone region (central Australia) has generally experienced average to above-average seasonal conditions since 2010. Therefore, we have not had an opportunity to test some of the reforms under drought conditions. The comments below are thus focussed on the intent of the reforms and how they might operate in the NT.

1. The NT DPIR supports the stronger emphasis on drought preparedness rather than Exceptional Circumstances or other compensation schemes.
2. Allowing producers to put more money into Farm Management Deposits has been a very positive initiative.
3. Given the vast distances and considerable expense that NT producers incur attending training, the NT DPIR would welcome assistance from the Commonwealth to provide direct incentives to producers to participate in training that increases their resilience to climate variability and drought.
4. Like biosecurity programs, it is challenging to maintain the desired momentum and resourcing for drought-preparedness initiatives during “the good times”. One way of doing so might be to develop some standard “branding” for use by governments, industry and non-government organisations that can help to identify activities and initiatives related to the National Drought Program.

Yours sincerely



Dr Dionne Walsh
Rangeland Program Manager

21 September 2017