



Rural Financial Counselling Service NSW Central Region

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Ms. Ros Matley
Drought Task Group Secretariat
IGA Review Secretariat

RE: REVIEW OF THE DROUGHT IGA

Dear Ros

Firstly, I must apologise for the lateness of my correspondence and brevity of my comments.

Unfortunately, the period selected for the review by identified stakeholders, that is the time taken from receipt of the Review Document letter (25.08.17) and the deadline for responses being today (22.09.17) was far too short for me to prepare an appropriate response to do justice to the task at hand. Both me and my staff have been somewhat distracted by responsibilities to our funding body DAWR, with the preparation for the end of year reports and financial analyses. This is not the greatest excuse but the fact is that I have not really had an appropriate opportunity to allocate time to respond accordingly.

If there was the opportunity to have an extension of time for two to three weeks, I'm sure that I could provide the IGA Chair with a stronger response.

Today my comments and thoughts on the IGA Review are as follows:

- 1. I am not sure what feedback we should be providing. I understand what the IGA scope and purpose was but before making comment on the IGA progress to date, it would be nice to know the performance indicators, and actual outcomes and outputs of the program at this point in time.**

Extracts from IGA:

Outcomes

7. This agreement will facilitate achievement of the following outcomes:
 - a. primary producers have an improved capacity to manage business risks
 - b. farm families are supported in times of hardship.

Outputs

8. The following measures will be implemented under this agreement:
 - a. a farm household support payment
 - b. continued access to Farm Management Deposits (FMDs) and taxation measures
 - c. a national approach to farm business training
 - d. a coordinated, collaborative approach to the provision of social support services
 - e. tools and technologies to inform farmer decision making.

9. Future programs related to the objectives of this agreement will be consistent with the principles for reform agreed by the Standing Council on Primary Industries (SCoPI) at Attachment A.
10. Future programs providing temporary in-drought support will be consistent with the principles and processes agreed by SCoPI at Attachment B.

2. **Given additional time, I would be in a position to comment on State and Commonwealth responsibilities and possibly provide a commentary identifying if in our opinion there has been achievement of the IGA objectives which are to:**

Extracts from IGA:

Objectives

6. This agreement aims to:
 - a. assist farm families and primary producers adapt to and prepare for the impacts of increased climate variability
 - b. encourage farm families and primary producers to adopt self-reliant approaches to manage their business risks
 - c. ensure that farm families in hardship have access to a household support payment that recognises the special circumstances of farmers
 - d. ensure that appropriate social support services are accessible to farm families
 - e. provide a framework for jurisdictions' responses to needs during periods of drought.

3. For example the Commonwealth is responsible for:

Extracts from IGA:

Role of the Commonwealth

12. The Commonwealth is responsible for:

- a. funding and delivering a time-limited farm household support payment based on individual need, including
 - i. reciprocal obligations aimed at driving behavioural change
 - ii. case management to support reciprocal obligations
- b. providing continued access to primary producer taxation concessions that support farmer risk management, including the FMD Scheme
- c. delivering Commonwealth programs under this agreement
- d. developing a Commonwealth implementation plan in consultation with the states and territories
- e. monitoring and assessing the delivery and performance of Commonwealth programs under this agreement
- f. reporting on the delivery of Commonwealth programs and the contribution of these programs to the achievement of outcomes as set out in this agreement.

4. I believe that with additional time I would have been able to provide appropriate commentary on:

- the perceived effectiveness of case management support provided to farm household support clients (FHA) by DHS FHA case officers. General comments from farmers have included that the reduced number of DHS FHA case officers made it difficult for clients to access consistent and appropriate support, however this has been anecdotal not evidence based comment
- the effectiveness of the FIA to the program and the success of DHS case officers working with their clients to drive behavioral is in need of addressing
- the effectiveness of the referral network linking DHS FHA clients to the RFCS program needs to be thoroughly reviewed for effectiveness. This is a key federal government program chartered to meet the top two objectives of the IGA:
 - ‘assist farm families and primary producers adapt to and prepare for the impacts of increased climate variability’; and
 - ‘encourage farm families and primary producers to adopt self-reliant approaches to manage their business risks’

Extracts from IGA:

Role of the states and territories

13. Each state or territory is responsible for:

- a. encouraging the delivery and uptake of the national approach to farm business training
- b. delivering state or territory programs under this agreement
- c. developing a state or territory implementation plan, in consultation with the Commonwealth
- d. monitoring and assessing the delivery and performance of state or territory programs under this agreement
- e. reporting on the delivery of state or territory programs and the contribution of these programs to the achievement of the objectives of this agreement.

5. It would have been appropriate to have commented on:

- the effectiveness of the various national farm business training programs within our region. To achieve an effective response to the Review, it would have been effective to have researched the listing of what was delivered under the IGA in terms of farm business

training. I am aware of various training programs however at times the take up appears to be quite limited. It is hoped that the IGA review will investigate the inhibitors to training take-up and provide direction towards an improvement in this area.

In closing, I do believe the improvement in interagency collaboration, information sharing and formal referral processes at a Federal, State and non-government level would improve outcomes for clients using the services/programs within this domain.

I would also suggest that double up of service provision across two agencies is also not a great way to do business. An instance that has been evident where the FHA Case Officer was chartered to work with the client to do many of the tasks the RFCS program has been chartered to deliver.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond, again my apologies for the brevity of my responses.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caldbeck". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial 'C' and a trailing flourish.

Jeff Caldbeck

CEO

Rural Financial Counselling Service NSW – Central West