



Supporting **small businesses** severely affected by drought

New Australian Government assistance for drought-affected small business

On 7 November 2006, the Australian Government announced new measures to help drought-affected small businesses. These measures recognise the unprecedented severity, length and extent of the current drought, and its impact on rural and regional communities, the environment, and the broader Australian economy.

Access to support for small business

The Small Business Drought Assistance package extends Exceptional Circumstances (EC) income and business support to eligible small businesses until at least March 2008. Examples of businesses which may be eligible include fencing contractors, contract harvesters, seed, feed and fertiliser suppliers, livestock transporters and shearing contractors and suppliers of farm machinery and equipment.

To be eligible, small business operators must:

- source a minimum 70 per cent of their income from the provision of goods and services for farming activities in Exceptional Circumstance declared areas
- employ up to 20 full time equivalent staff
- have experienced a significant downturn as a result of the drought
- contribute a significant part of their labour and capital to the business and derive a significant part of their income from the business
- be 18 years old
- be an Australian resident or have permission to stay permanently in Australia, and
- have a current Australian Business Number and carry out commercial activities.

Other eligibility criteria may apply to different programmes. Eligible small business operators can now access the same support as farmers under the Exceptional Circumstances programme. This assistance takes two forms; income support and business support. Income support, or the Small Business Income Support Payment, is provided through Centrelink as a fortnightly payment, in a similar manner to Newstart Allowance. Business support, or the Small Business Interest Rate Subsidy, is administered by the state and territory rural assistance authorities.

Where can I get further information?

Further details about the Small Business Drought Assistance package are available through the Drought Assistance Hotline on **13 23 16**.

For information about the Small Business Interest Rate Subsidy contact your state or territory rural assistance authority through **www.daff.gov.au/droughtassist** or telephone numbers are listed below:

- New South Wales: NSW Rural Assistance Authority: **1800 331 126**
- South Australia: Primary Industry and Resources South Australia: **180 20 20**
- Queensland: QRAA: **1800 623 946**
- Victoria: Rural Finance Corporation of Victoria: **03 5448 2600**
- Western Australia: Rural Business Development Corporation: **1800 198 231**