

DROUGHT POLICY REVIEW

EXPERT SOCIAL PANEL

MEDIA RELEASE

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Call for submissions to the expert social panel's assessment

Farmers, farm families, rural communities and social support service providers are among the many stakeholders being asked to contribute to the Australian Government's assessment of the social impacts of drought.

Chair of the expert panel leading the investigation, Mr Peter Kenny, today announced the release of an *Issues Paper*, and called for submissions from all affected and interested parties.

"The social panel has been asked to report on the social impacts being felt by individuals, families and communities as a result of the prolonged drought," Mr Kenny said.

"Our primary role is to stimulate discussion and reflection in a consultative process, so that consideration can be given to improving social support for those who have been affected by drought.

"Irrespective of whether someone is eligible for Exceptional Circumstances (EC) assistance, we want to learn what social support people value or perceive people need in times of drought.

"The social panel will be visiting many drought affected rural communities across Australia to talk to people face-to-face, with further details on these public forums to be announced shortly.

"Unfortunately, the social panel won't be able to make it to all drought-affected towns, so we encourage all affected and interested parties to make a written submission.

"Combined with the feedback gained at the face-to-face forums, formal submissions will be critical to the success of the social panel's assessment," Mr Kenny said.

The seven-member expert panel was appointed earlier this month by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Tony Burke.

Along with the social assessment, investigations into the economic impacts of drought and future climate patterns are being carried out as part of the national review of drought policy.

The *Issues Paper* can be downloaded from the National Review of Drought Policy's website at www.daff.gov.au/droughtpolicyreview.

All interested stakeholders, including those wanting to participate in the social assessment's public consultation process, are encouraged to register their details on the website's Stakeholder Register.

All media enquiries relating to the social panel or assessment should be directed to Mr Peter Kenny on 07 3238 6033.

Media enquiries concerning the government's national review of drought policy, including the economic and climatic assessments, should be referred to Mr Dale Starr on 0434 305 166.