



PRIME MINISTER

AGRICULTURE - ADVANCING AUSTRALIA

I was delighted to launch today the Coalition Government's \$500m Integrated Rural Policy Package, appropriately titled "Agriculture - Advancing Australia".

There can be no denying that farmers have been doing it tough for many years, suffering from both drought and low commodity prices.

However, our farmers are always looking to the future and new opportunities and my Government is pleased to play a role in helping them.

"Agriculture - Advancing Australia" brings together a number of reforms to lift the viability of farmers into the future and lay the basis for greater self reliance. It also provides scope for farmers to exit with dignity if they so desire.

The main elements of the package include :

- Farm Management Deposits to provide farmers with the tools they need for greater self reliance;
- Farm Business Improvement Programme (FarmBis) to provide assistance for skills development, farm business planning/advice, farm performance benchmarking, risk management, marketing and natural resource management;
- Farm Family Restart Scheme to deliver improved welfare to the farm sector to support them while they assess future opportunities and make any necessary changes;
- Exceptional Circumstances assistance to provide farmers with help for those times when financial planning simply will not be enough in the face of exceptionally adverse conditions;
- A gifting moratorium to help the inter-generational transfer of the farm, and
- Funding for rural communities to help them cope with change and find new economic opportunities.

This package builds on a number of initiatives this Government has put in place to help rural Australia, including the Natural Heritage Trust, the Regional Communications Initiative, Supermarket to Asia, extra spending on quarantine and extra resources for regional health.

“Agriculture - Advancing Australia” is a strong and positive response to the needs of our farmers. It is an important element of our plan to rebuild regional Australia.

“Agriculture - Advancing Australia” is something for which my Government is justifiably proud.

14 September 1997