

Media Release

Steve Dimopoulos MP

Minister for Environment
Minister for Outdoor Recreation
Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events
Acting Minister for Agriculture



Tuesday, 21 January 2025

COORDINATING SUPPORT FOR FARMERS THROUGH DROUGHT

The Allan Labor Government has appointed a dedicated Drought Coordinator for the South West Victorian community and farmers to help them access the financial, technical and wellbeing support they need.

Acting Minister for Agriculture Steve Dimopoulos today announced the appointment of Ralph Cotter as Regional Drought Coordinator for South West Victoria, based in the South West, Mr Cotter has strong connections with industry and government and local service providers and has had a long involvement with agriculture sector.

Based in the South West, the Regional Drought Coordinator will meet regularly with industry and local governments to understand the challenges specific to the region and coordinate tailored support and advice to impacted communities.

Since announcing the \$13.53 million Drought Support Package last September, 969 on-farm drought infrastructure grants of up to \$5000 have been approved and paid to farmers.

These grants are enabling South West Victorian farmers to complete infrastructure improvements that respond to the current drought and build their resilience for future droughts.

Farmer wellbeing remains a critical focus with a \$1.43 million investment in farmer wellbeing and technical advice to acknowledge the emotional toll on farmers as they respond to the drought and the recent bushfires.

As part of the Drought Support Package, \$80,000 was provided to boost the capacity of the Rural Financial Counselling Service Victoria West along with a further investment of \$160,000 to support a full-time wellbeing counsellor working in the region.

In addition to the Drought Support Package, the Government has provided \$35,000 for the National Centre for Farmer Health's new mental health hub, offering tailored mental health information and resources for farmers.

Drought technical decision-making support continues to be delivered by Agriculture Victoria and partners, with a range of events and information available, including one-on-one consultations and group workshops.

To view the full range of financial, technical and wellbeing support available to drought impacted farmers visit agriculture.vic.gov.au/dryseasons or phone 136 186.

Quote Attributable to Acting Minister for Agriculture Steve Dimopoulos

'The appointment of a dedicated Drought Support Coordinator will ensure support is flowing to where it is needed most for farmers in the South West.'

Quote attributable to Member for Western Victoria Jacinta Ermacora

'We're supporting our farmers and local communities when they need it most with practical, targeted support to deal with the current drought conditions and to withstand future conditions.'

Quote Attributable to Regional Drought Coordinator Ralph Cotter

'I've been meeting with industry and councils across the south west and hearing about the challenges farmers in the region are facing.'

'Farmers experiencing drought conditions are urged to reach out. We are here to help. Whether it's through connecting you with the financial grants, technical advice or wellbeing support, we can connect you with the resources you need to navigate this difficult time.'