
NSW Farming: Investing Locally, Connecting Globally

Memorandum of Understanding



Context

New South Wales is the engine room of Australia's economy. It is also home to our nation's largest, most diverse and globally connected agricultural industry. The NSW primary industries sector contributes \$12 billion each year to the State's economy, underpinning the economic, social and cultural fabric of many rural and regional communities making a substantial contribution to the State. For this reason, it is important we have a plan to drive growth into the future; a vision for where our primary industries sector is heading.

The NSW Government's Agriculture Industry Action Plan (IAP) *Primed for growth: Investing locally, connecting globally* was released in November 2014 and provides a clear roadmap for industry and government to work together to drive growth.

The IAP framework is supported by the NSW Liberals & Nationals' historic levels of investment in regional infrastructure and services. We are rebuilding regional roads and rail, which improve access of primary producers to domestic and international markets. We are also investing in regional health and educational facilities as well as employing more nurses, doctors and teachers to provide equality for all, no matter where they live in NSW.

Purpose

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is between the NSW Liberals & Nationals and the NSW Farmers Association (NSWFA). Its purpose is to drive the growth of agriculture as a major economic driver of the NSW economy, specifically through investment in regional NSW.

It commits the NSW Liberals & Nationals to work with NSWFA on the implementation of the recommendations contained within the IAP. In addition, a range of specific actions have been identified by the membership of NSWFA in the lead up to the 2015 state election which relate to increasing agricultural production in NSW.

If re-elected, the NSW Liberals & Nationals will work with NSWFA to deliver the tangible and measurable outcomes outlined in this MOU. The NSW Liberals & Nationals will convene a regular forum with NSWFA to review progress on these initiatives. This MOU establishes a framework for NSWFA and the NSW Liberal & National Parties to work collaboratively on the identified issues.

A commitment to reforming our biodiversity laws

The centrepiece of this MOU is a commitment to the reform of the state's biodiversity laws. The NSW Liberals & Nationals are committed to enhancing the State's biodiversity for the benefit of current and future generations. Our recent commitment of \$100M for Saving our Species programs and \$15M for Landcare is yet further tangible demonstration of this.

When we came to Government, we inherited complex and ineffective laws that were failing to adequately conserve our native vegetation. Independent advice to Government was that under Labor's laws, the condition of most native vegetation in NSW has deteriorated.

We are determined to do better where Labor failed. That's why in 2014 we commissioned an independent review of our biodiversity legislation, conducted by four leading experts in biodiversity and natural resource management:

- Dr Neil Byron – Chair
- Dr Wendy Craik
- Dr John Keniry
- Professor Hugh Possingham

The Independent Expert Panel made 43 recommendations to Government on how to minimise future losses of native biodiversity. The NSW Liberals & Nationals support the recommendations in full and will implement them as an integrated package of reforms.

Central to this reform is the development of a new *Biodiversity Conservation Act* which takes an outcomes-focused and evidence-based approach to biodiversity and will replace the *Native Vegetation Act 2003*, *Threatened Species Act 1995* and sections of the *National Parks & Wildlife Act 1974*.

Our reforms recognise the value of farmers and primary producers as environmental custodians. Farmers alone should not be left with the challenge of protecting landscape health and ecosystem function. The impacts of inadequate biodiversity management, including the extinction of native species, increased soil erosion, dry land salinity and declining water quality affect us all. Ecologically sustainable development requires the whole community to be responsible for the biodiversity impacts of development and land clearing.

We recognise the farming community's interest in ensuring that effective reform is progressed with urgency. We will conduct targeted stakeholder consultation during the development of new legislation, with a view to releasing an exposure draft Bill by November 2015. The independent panel will have an ongoing role in this process.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals are committed to ensuring that the reforms deliver the right balance between economic and social considerations while enhancing overall environmental outcomes.

Our reforms offer the opportunity to fix Labor's ineffective legislation. The independent expert advice to Government is that positive environmental outcomes are best achieved by putting more protections in place across a region to deal with cumulative impacts of ecologically sustainable development.

Our reforms will be supported by a significant and ongoing investment in biodiversity outcomes, including funding for private conservation efforts, and supporting threatened species recovery efforts.

The reforms offer a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve landscape health, ecosystem function, land use productivity and conservation outcomes across the State. They will give farmers the freedom to get on with good land management while enhancing landscape health and ecosystem function, and ensure that we are all contributing.

A commitment to other shared priorities

1. **NSW Farmers objective: Strengthened biosecurity in NSW including R&D for agriculture & aquaculture:**

The NSW Liberals & Nationals commitment: We will establish a NSW Biosecurity Advisory Committee, including NSWFA, to maintain oversight of the development, implementation and operation of the anticipated new biosecurity legislation. An early focus for the Committee will be to progress horticultural biosecurity issues such as abandoned orchards, property identification codes, fruit fly controls and the implementation of protocols to expand export opportunities for NSW horticulturalists.

2. **NSW Farmers objective: Financial commitment to fund an increase of Local Land Services extension staff to support agriculture & aquaculture:**

The NSW Liberals & Nationals commitment: We commit a minimum of \$4.0 million over four years in additional resources to biosecurity and extension services within Local Land Services. This will be announced as part of the finalisation of the strategic plan for Local Land Services (LLS) advisory services, which will be completed after consultation with NSWFA.

3. **Farmers objective: Commitment to extension of flying fox netting program:**

The NSW Liberals & Nationals commitment: We agree to fund the extension of the flying fox netting subsidy program. The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) will continue to work with Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) to reduce the impacts of flying foxes on the State's orchards.

4. **NSW Farmers objective: Commitment of min. \$6 billion for regional transport and infrastructure in electorates that support agricultural production:**

The NSW Liberals & Nationals commitment: We are committed to allocating \$6 billion from the proceeds of the long-term lease of 49% of Sydney's electricity networks to infrastructure which enhances the productive capacity of regional and rural NSW.

5. **NSW Farmers objective: Support for augmentation of existing dams wherever feasible. Pursuit of an assessment of feasibility of new dams:**

The NSW Liberals & Nationals commitment: We will invest \$1.25 billion in regional communities' water supplies, helping them become more drought resilient and support population growth. Through Rebuilding NSW funding, we will commit up to \$550 million to deliver water infrastructure in the State's priority catchments of the Upper Hunter, Gwydir, Macquarie, and Lachlan river systems, helping reduce drought conditions crippling local economies.

6. **NSW Farmers objective: Commitment to additional funding for farmers to invest in drought recovery and preparedness initiatives:**

The NSW Liberals & Nationals commitment: We released our policy earlier in 2015, which included additional funding to build drought resilience. The NSW Liberals & Nationals are committed to consult with NSWFA and other relevant stakeholder organisations on the implementation of this policy and its programs.

7. **NSW Farmers objective: Commitment to developing multi-peril insurance as an option for farmers:**

The NSW Liberals & Nationals commitment: We will work with the Commonwealth Government to jointly host a summit to progress the development of a commercial multi-peril insurance sector for our cropping sector.

8. NSW Farmers objective: Continued support for the National Livestock Identification System and non-mandatory Standards and Guidelines for Animal Welfare:

The NSW Liberals & Nationals commitment: We will support the current NLIS system with no system of mandatory electronic identification ear tags for sheep and goats in Australia, subject to ongoing industry support for improved traceability. We also re-affirm our commitment to non-mandatory standards and guidelines for animal welfare.

9. NSW Farmers objective: Commitment to review recognition of prior learning where best practice is demonstrable eg under pesticide regulations:

The NSW Liberals & Nationals commitment: We will work with NSWFA to develop a short-list of regulations to be reviewed and reformed.

10. NSW Farmers objective: State wide review of pest animal management plus commitment to fully funded programs:

The NSW Liberals & Nationals commitment: We will conduct a review of pest management in NSW and to work on appropriate funding models which would follow the review.

11. NSW Farmers objective: Commitment to holding a roundtable on young farmer finance with key stakeholders:

The NSW Liberals & Nationals commitment: We will commit to holding a roundtable during the second-half of 2015.

12. NSW Farmers objective: Strengthening of the Gateway Panel process i.e. gate on and loop back mechanism :

The NSW Liberals & Nationals commitment: We will review the Mining SEPP during the second half of 2015.

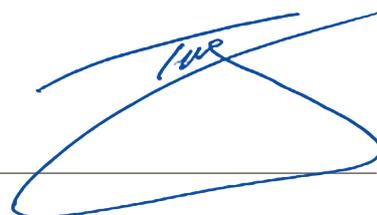
13. NSW Farmers objective: Investment in industry-led, cross-commodity quality assurance strategy:

The NSW Liberals & Nationals commitment: We will invest \$1.5m for the development of a cross-commodity quality assurance strategy.

14. NSW Farmers objective: Development of a legislated Right to Farm:

The NSW Liberals & Nationals commitment: We will consider proposals for a Right to Farm policy during 2015.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals also commit to working to progress other priorities identified by NSWFA and its membership, including securing landholder interests in Lightning Ridge and development of a cattle underpass scheme.



Troy Grant

Signing on behalf of the NSW Liberals & Nationals



Fiona Simson

President, NSW Farmers

Dated 25 March 2015.