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## Vital support for drought-ready farmers

NSW Department Primary Industries (DPI) is committed to working closely with farmers, industry and stakeholders in delivering a \$300 million drought package to ensure NSW is better prepared for future drought conditions.

DPI's Rural Assistance Authority (RAA) Director, John Newcombe, said the department has a range of services available to help NSW farmers better prepare for adverse conditions.

"Planning for the long-term and adapting to change is an effective way farmers can prepare for drought and other downturns, Mr Newcombe said.

Some of the DPI services include the Farm Innovation Fund, Farm Business Skills Program, fodder transport subsidies and a Rural Resilience Program.

"The Rural Resilience Program provides permanent support workers contracted to meet specific farming community needs related to adverse events."

The Farm Innovation Fund provides long-term, low interest loans up to \$250,000 for permanent on-farm infrastructure including drought preparation measures.

"In the last financial year alone, RAA approved 331 loans totalling over \$53 million."

Mark and Mischelle Schiller, producers from the Hay region, have invested in a pipeline and stock watering system utilising a loan from the Farm Innovation Fund.

Mr Schiller, who runs Merinos and Dorpers on 12,000 hectares, said after 10 years of drought, 2 floods and another drought their wool enterprise now has greater water security.

"It's a very reassuring feeling and means we don't have to move or sell stock because of a lack of stock water in a paddock anymore," Mr Schiller said.

"Access to the pipeline will more than pay for itself through improved farm efficiency."

The Farm Business Skills Professional Development Program offers a 50 per cent subsidy for up to \$9,000 per farm business for vocational training, farm business planning and risk management skills.

With 118 registered courses, the program approved in excess of 420 applications to the value of \$850,000 in the 2016/17 financial year.

Mr Newcombe said these educational programs help farmers learn to manage their business more effectively – working with nature, not against it.

"Partnering with farming communities to strengthen networks, share information and increase resilience is a priority in rural NSW as farmers continue to manage seasonal conditions," he said.

For more information on services, subsidies, and assistance measures, visit the [DroughtHub website](#).

**Media Contact: 02 6391 3686**



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