

## **National Wool Industry National Bushfire Recovery Fund (NBRF) Priorities:**

WoolProducers has liaised with woolgrowers following the recent and ongoing bushfire situation unfolding across multiple jurisdictions in Australia and consider the following actions would be of assistance.

WoolProducers has also had input into the National Farmers Federation (NFF) priorities and support those measures in addition to the those proposed below.

### **Immediate:**

#### ***Administrative requirements:***

1. Nationally consistent approach to fire recovery, underpinned by an intergovernmental agreement that specifies objectives and clearly defines roles and responsibilities for each level of government.
2. Establishment of a framework for jurisdictions to monitor, review and adapt fire recovery assistance programs with affected industry and local government and community involvement.
3. Streamline the administrative processes for obtaining government support in order to reduce the cost of administering programs and the administrative burden on those seeking to access assistance.
4. Utilising and leveraging the existing drought support networks that are currently in place in drought affected areas now impacted by fire to ensure continuity of assistance measures.

#### ***Industry/regional requirements:***

5. Ongoing assistance to primary producers for the clean-up process, including subsidies for the replacement of infrastructure that was lost in fires.
6. Expedited repairs to essential services including telecommunications (these should be upgraded to more modern systems in areas where older technology is still used), road and rail infrastructure, to enable faster return to normal business activities.
7. Appointment and support of Regional Recovery Coordinators, with the inclusion of resources for Livestock Recovery Support (note: this could be modelled off the proposed Dairy Recovery Coordinator but focused at a regional level across broadacre livestock enterprises).
8. Situation analysis of domestic fodder availability. Drought requirements must be factored in to needs. There may be a need for the first time to import fodder into Australia to meet fire recovery and ongoing drought feeding requirements.
9. Grain stocks reporting to inform supply decisions based on expected demand, including use of grain for animal feed manufacture.
10. Freight and fodder subsidies, including 100% subsidized freight for transporting livestock to and from emergency agistment.
11. Enabling direct access to Farm Management Deposits to companies and agribusiness trusts
12. Expansion of role for Rural Financial Counsellor to include assistance to fire affected producers and the additional RFCs in these areas.
13. Funding for mental health support. Support needs to be available locally and not see people referred to mental health services in regional centres (unless these are the nearest town) or state capital cities.

14. Funding for Blaze Aid and other rebuilding type charities or labour hire companies to rebuild fencing and water infrastructure.
15. Targeted assistance payment (eg \$75,000 per ABN as suggested by NFF) with defined eligibility and spending requirements. This should assist farmers with restocking through purchase or lease of livestock, purchase of fencing materials, payment of contractors (e.g. fencing contractors, grater drivers), farm infrastructure (e.g. purchase water troughs, rebuild fodder and feed storage sheds) and allow for rebuilding of homes if lost due to fires.
16. Household assistance measures, including more efficient and expedited access to the Farm Household Allowance scheme and support measures to help affected farmers exit industry should they choose to do so.
17. Exit support measures: assistance measures to enable farmers to exit farming, such as recognised prior learning resulting in qualifications through TAFE for skills used on-farm (e.g. animal husbandry, welding, equipment licensing (e.g. forklift, tractor, firearms).
18. Increasing the claimable threshold for the current small business instant asset write-off and retention of the accelerated depreciation arrangements for primary producers in perpetuity
19. Support for state/territory governments to suspend rural land rates for primary producers during fire recovery.
20. Suspension of wool and transaction levies for affected wool producers over the next 12 months.
21. Income support for primary producers and employees of primary production businesses (including workers whose employment has needed to be terminated due to the fire).

## **Medium (2-6 months) – Long (6+months):**

1. Assist in flock rebuilding requirements – low sheep numbers due to decimation of national flock due to continued drought further compacted by losses in three states due to fire. This could include government support for:
2. Allocation of funds for continued contribution to the maintenance and erection of wild dog exclusion/barrier fences; Commitment to fund the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions for \$20 million per year from 2021 for ten years to broker and manage strategic, large-scale and collaborative invasive species RD&E;Funding to provide systems to sustainably manage kangaroos.
3. Expedite the development of guidelines for the Small Business Drought Loans administered by the RIC ensuring they are expanded to include assistance to bushfire affected primary producers.
4. Development of a Federal Bushfire Recovery Loan modelled on the loan eligibility requirements for the 'AgRebuild Loan (North Queensland Flood)' administered by RIC.
5. Low interest loans available to assist farmers with farm infrastructure repair/replacement (including fencing, water infrastructure, pasture restoration).
6. Finalisation and implementation of a National Agricultural Resilience Policy as
7. Finalisation of a national drought policy
8. Promptly implements all ten recommendations from the 2018 Regional Telecommunications Review – telecommunications in fire effected communities have been a massive issue
9. Increased government contribution to the Rural Research and Development Corporations to make-up the shortfall occurring due to the suspension of payment of transaction levies.

10. Additional government funding contribution to the Rural Research and Development Corporations to be used solely for increased extension services to producers to assist with recovery from bushfires and drought.
11. Rural/regional community support: federal assistance provided to replacing/upgrading social amenity infrastructure, retaining local workforces particularly if there are job losses resulting from the ongoing drought conditions and/or bushfires (this could be assisted through rural/regional labour employment assistance payments to primary production businesses and rural/regional SMEs), and community grants for long-term support of affected persons that could be administered through organisations such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army, Smith Family or Country Women's Association.