

AUSTRALIAN FARM INSTITUTE

MEDIA RELEASE



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Insight on drought policy from AFI

With a growing consensus that climate change is contributing to more frequent and intense drought periods, support has strengthened to put a long-term, whole-of-agriculture, whole-of-government drought strategy on the national agenda.

The Australian Farm Institute's *Insights* newsletter November edition focuses on drought policy, featuring contributions from the Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack, Goondiwindi farmer Pete Mailler, AFI Executive Director Richard Heath, AFI General Manager Katie McRobert and AFI Researcher Anne Laurie.

"Climate change is a reality that should be fundamentally changing the way drought policy is developed," wrote Mr Heath.

"Being prepared for and resilient to drought is a necessity in Australian agriculture. Avoiding drought-induced farm business financial crises - with all the flow-on effects to communities, mental health and the wider economy - must be the aim of responsible Government policy.

"However, simply saying that farm businesses 'should be prepared' without providing the tools and conditions to allow for preparation is not only disingenuous but also irresponsible and will not reduce the number of people suffering hardship each time there is a drought."

Mr McCormack and Mr Mailler responded to four questions on drought policy, resilience and preparedness.

"We don't need a drought policy so much as we need a policy that mitigates the inevitable suite of increasingly hostile hot, dry and we weather disruptions which climate change will deliver," Mr Mailler said.

Mr McCormack said the Coalition has engaged in "consistent conversation with farmers and key stakeholders about the specific tools they need to manage the diverse challenges Mother Nature throws at them".

Referencing Gabrielle Chan's book *Rusted Off*, Ms McRobert noted there is an ever-growing divide between voters on the ground and their representatives encased in the 'Canberra bubble', exemplified by the current climate change debate.

"The Australian political landscape now hosts a 'permanent campaign', in which participants continuously utilise the mechanisms of politics for the goal of re-election rather than seeking election as the means of achieving political goals," she said.

"This divide – evident in the lack of leadership or long-term thinking on drought policy – ultimately degrades our democracy."

It is evident that building resilience and facilitating early intervention is a preferable long-term drought policy strategy rather than direct support measures. The AFI is currently conducting timely research into risk management systems in Australian agriculture. While the research is not yet complete, there have been several learnings from the work to date, summarised in Ms Laurie's *Insights* article.

“Building resilience and facilitating early intervention will involve a strategy that includes a range of Government and industry initiatives, affordable income insurance options, provision of weather derivatives and other financial tools,” said Ms Laurie.

[Farm Institute Insights](#) is available now.

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Contacts:

Richard Heath, AFI Executive Director – 0427 447 872

Katie McRobert, AFI General Manager – 0477 758 257

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