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**The Hon Joe Hockey**

Treasurer

18 September 2013 - 21 September 2015

21 July 2015

Media Release (<http://jbh.ministers.treasury.gov.au/media-release/>)

## Dedicated tax support service for drought affected communities

Joint media release  
with the Hon Barnaby Joyce  
Minister for Agriculture

The Australian Government is committed to helping drought affected communities and we are pleased to announce a new service to help people manage their tax affairs when times are tough.

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) will work with the Department of Agriculture to identify drought-affected taxpayers and will provide personalised assistance and customised support plans for business owners and communities in these areas.

With the establishment of a dedicated hotline for drought affected taxpayers on 13 11 42 (Select Option 3), people who need support can discuss their situation and available options to help them manage their tax obligations.

Help options can include payment plans tailored to individual circumstances, including interest-free periods and extensions of time to pay tax bills or make lodgements.

The ATO has also undertaken to get in contact with businesses in drought-affected communities to make sure they are aware of the options available to help them meet their obligations.

The ATO will visit some regional towns and centres to provide face-to-face support, as well as hold 'town hall' style meetings.

The extra support from the ATO complements the support the Government is already delivering to farmers, farm businesses and rural communities in drought-affected areas across Australia.

The Government has already announced more favourable depreciation arrangements for primary producers for water facilities, fodder storage and fencing. This represents estimated savings in the order of \$142 million for farmers across the country.

The depreciation measures are part of the Government's \$4 billion investment in Australian farmers in the *Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper*.

Supporting drought affected communities in the hard times is essential to the success of the agricultural sector and the nation's economy at large.

Helping people through times of drought is in our national interest. Despite unprecedented drought conditions in some parts of the country, Australia's agriculture sector will contribute almost \$54 billion to the economy this financial year.

I encourage communities to talk to the ATO and other government agencies to find out about the help that's available to them.



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