

Coalition Continues Support for Australian Dairy Farmers

The ADF has heard from Minister Joyce that he will be convening a symposium on dairy issues as part of the Coalitions election commitments. The ADF will be working hard over the next few weeks to prepare for the Symposium.

We expect it will provide an opportunity to discuss the major issues facing the industry including \$ milk, fair contract terms and conditions, a world dairy commodity pricing index, issues in WA where some farmers have been given notice of not being picked up and backpacker tax, to name a few of the high priority issues.

While we have welcomed the Governments support package we continue to urge changes to the criteria for access to most elements of the Governments support package, particularly the concessional loans package.

The plan announced in the lead up to the 2016 election, included \$555 million in concessional loans with 10-year loan terms, \$20 million for an upgrade to Gippsland irrigation infrastructure, \$2 million to establish a commodity milk price index and \$1.8 million to provide business and financial counselling.

I urge all farmers to not self-assess whether they are eligible for the concessional loans support package. We know many have had difficulty with access and we have been able to use some of these experiences in our ongoing discussions with the Department for changes to the eligibility criteria.

The Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister will be meeting with the Murray Goulburn Board to discuss the global and domestic challenges facing Australian dairy farmers. It will be interesting to hear the outcome of this meeting. Mr. Joyce will then convene the dairy farmer symposium with the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

The ongoing support and commitment of government is essential for us to successfully navigate through these trying times so we are able to provide innovative and practical solutions to help farmers achieve a sustainable level of profitability. We need to ensure that the solutions we present are in our farmers' best interests, so they can take control of their situation and make informed choices.

ADF thanks Barnaby Joyce for maintaining this election promise and his continued commitment to seeking solutions to the current dairy situation.

David Basham**Acting ADF President**