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## **BIG BOOST TO MENTAL HEALTH FOR FARMERS**

Drought-ravaged communities across NSW are set to benefit from significant funding to support mental health as farmers battle through their third year of a crippling dry spell.

Treasurer Dominic Perrottet and Mental Health Minister Bronnie Taylor today announced \$8.275 million for drought-related mental health initiatives over the next year as part of an expansion of the Emergency Drought Relief Package.

“Drought doesn’t just have a toll on the land and on the livelihoods of our farmers and rural communities, it can have serious mental health consequences,” Mr Perrottet said.

“We are investing more than \$1.8 billion to help farmers, and this funding is especially important because it can help people who are battling not just the drought but the impact on their wellbeing.”

Mrs Taylor said the package would include additional funding for mental health drought support workers, known as “farm gate counsellors” who reach out to individuals, families and communities with direct support and counselling services.

“This boost will help farmers build community resilience, and provide support services and well-being initiatives they can relate to,” said Mrs Taylor.

“Rural communities are full of proud, resilient people who may not want to admit they are struggling and are reluctant to seek help, but these conditions are causing significant distress for many people, placing their mental health at risk.

“Counsellors are working closely with people in regional communities helping them remain focused on getting through these tough conditions. The NSW Government will continue to do everything it can to support our regional farmers.”

The funding will also provide culturally and community appropriate mental health and wellbeing support for local Aboriginal communities.

Mrs Taylor said funding would also go towards expanding locally-tailored community events and a State-wide youth drought summit.

The NSW Government last year announced a range of drought assistance packages, including \$6.3 million to provide mental health and wellbeing support in drought affected communities.

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