



Department of
**Primary Industries and
Regional Development**

2024 Dry Season Taskforce – meeting #5

Friday 5 July 2024

Meeting Communiqué

The Dry Season Taskforce met for the fifth time at Dumas House on Friday 5 July 2024.

The Taskforce is chaired by Rob Cossart, Chief Executive Officer of the Wheatbelt Development Commission. The Chair provided an overview of the Taskforce outcomes and highlighted the important role the Taskforce has played in providing advice to the Minister for Agriculture and Food and connecting with industry to support the response to dry seasonal conditions. The meeting discussions centred on lessons learnt from the response and preparedness for the 2024/25 season.

The Taskforce was established for a 3-month period to provide leadership, surge capacity and ensure a coordinated approach across government and industry to support farm businesses and rural communities. Acknowledging the commencement of winter rainfall patterns across the southern half of Western Australia and normalising of market conditions, this was the final meeting of the Taskforce. Delivery of Dry Season Response activities will transition to responsible agencies and industry bodies.

Taskforce members have agreed to informally regroup in early September to review the season outlook.

Seasonal weather and forecast update

The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) provided a briefing on the current weather conditions and forecast through to spring. While it has been a dry start to 2024, the weather pattern has changed from very dry to normal conditions. El Nino and La Nina climate drivers are now neutral indicating there is no broad driver for abnormal weather conditions.

Whilst the Mid-West region received good rainfall over recent weeks, rainfall totals remain low in the Great Southern and central Wheatbelt. Wagin and Narrogin have received around half of the average amount of rainfall they receive at this time of year. The forecast is for a normal winter rainfall pattern, averaging five weather fronts per month.

Water update

Water Corporation presented on the status of water resources across the Great Southern and Wheatbelt and the season outlook, including monitoring water levels and current water deficits. Water levels in the surface water storage network across the Great Southern and Wheatbelt is low and similar to the levels experienced in 2019. Water Corporation is continuing to monitor water levels and the cross-agency water monitoring working group (consisting of DPIRD, DWER and Water Corporation) will continue to operate throughout winter.

DPIRD update on dry season initiatives

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) provided an update on dry season initiatives, scenario modelling and 2024/25 summer preparedness.

With variable rainfall throughout May and June low soil moisture levels remains a significant challenge, and in some areas irrigation and dryland dams are at record low levels. Interstate livestock transfers are significantly higher than previous years and sheep meat exports continue at record levels. Crop yields continue to be monitored to assess impacts of the dry start to the season.

The \$5,000 Hardship Support Grants program has been fully committed with a high uptake in the Great Southern and South West regions. Funding was primarily used to purchase stockfeed and transport for stockfeed. The Interest-Free Loans are open to primary producers until 30 November 2024 or when funding is fully committed, whichever occurs first. Information on the Interest-Free Loans is available on the [Dry Season Response website](#) and the [DPIRD website](#).

Continuation of dry season initiatives

In recognition of the ongoing seasonal conditions, DPIRD will continue its dry season response activities and coordinate the delivery of initiatives funded through the Dry Season Response program, including mental health and financial assistance. The Community Water Supplies Partnerships program expansion is open until 11 November 2024 or when funds are fully committed.

An assessment of the Dry Season Response program will be undertaken in preparation for the 2024/25 season.

Next meeting

The Taskforce has now ceased however it will reconvene in early September to review the season outlook and consider emerging risks.

Members

Andrew Jenkins (Chair Western Dairy), Bindi Murray (Director Sheep Producers Australia), James Bowie (Director Cattle Australia), I-lyn Loo (CEO WA Meat Industry Authority), Peter Nash (CEO Grain Industry Association of WA), Erin Gorter (Vice Chair Grower Group Alliance), Madeline Anderson (Chair Noongar Land Enterprise Group), Michael Nixon (Director Hort Innovation), Andrew Clark (Chair Rural Business Development Corporation), Nick Sloan (CEO WA Local Government Association), Tim Shackleton (CEO Rural Health West), Cec McConnell (Deputy Director General - DPIRD), Emily Briggs (Deputy Director General - DWER), and Barry Ford (General Manager Operations - Water Corporation)

Important Disclaimer

The Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the State of Western Australia accept no liability whatsoever by reason of negligence or otherwise arising from the use or release of this information or any part of it.

Copyright © State of Western Australia (Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development), 2024.