

Drought relief red tape questioned

Jim Gainsford 10-8-2018

Community

More aid to come: The 34 tonne delivery of hay donated by Cronulla Lions Club arrives in Gunnedah during the week. Fresh from delivering a \$20,000 shipment of hay to struggling Gunnedah farmers, the Cronulla Lions Club has questioned the Federal Government's drought-relief efforts. After hearing about the effects of the drought first-hand from a Gunnedah farmer, a recent meeting of Cronulla Lions members raised \$20,000 in five minutes for drought relief. This was used to purchase 34,000 tonnes of hay to be sent to Gunnedah for farmers to use to feed their livestock.

But Cronulla Lions president Shaun Cronin said their money could have stretched even further if they had been able to claim the fuel subsidy for the delivery. "We can't get the fuel subsidy because we are not primary producers," he said.

"The hay cost \$11,100, and there was \$7,761 for the freight bill plus \$1886 GST - a total almost \$21,000.

"We believe the fuel subsidy would have been worth a couple of thousand dollars.



Cronulla Lions raised \$20,000 in five minutes to buy feed to help the livestock of farmers at Gunnedah.

"The difficult red tape processes to make the fuel subsidy available to all taxpayers prevents us from providing more needed urgent aid. "The money we save could be going to the farmers which stretched this drought relief further for us.

"We aren't we entitled to the fuel subsidy yet we are donating to the primary producers to help them get through the drought.

"This is not our money. This is public donated money from the good people of the shire.

"We are donating money now and feed now, not in for months time, which has been proposed."

Despite this, Cronulla Lions is well on the way to raising another \$20,000 for their next delivery of hay.

Mr Cronin said also criticised Federal Government red tape surrounding subsidies to farmers.

"The subsidies offered to our farmers are unworkable because of the bureaucratic framework," Mr Cronin said.

"They have to jump through hoops. "The government needs to come to its senses and realise that they are putting the farmers through a bureaucratic process that is too onerous. "They don't need to be filling out monumental pieces of paperwork at a time like this. This does not help their mental wellbeing." Mr Cronin and his fellow Cronulla Lions members are calling on every community group in Australia to rally to their own cause. "Pick a town affected, line-up some local contacts, a local Lions Club or other community groups and make it happen," Mr Cronin said.

"Please give generously, we need to keep helping our farmers."

Donations can be made on our web site: www.cronullalions.org.au