



Media Release

Corporate Communications

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ANZ invests \$1 million in drought-affected communities

ANZ today announced \$1 million worth of cash grants to support Australian farmers and communities affected by severe drought.

ANZ Managing Director, Regional, Rural and Small Business Banking, Mr Rob Goudswaard said the grants funding was part of ANZ's unique three-pronged plan to help farm communities through the drought and beyond.

"Farmers and the people in rural towns affected by drought are doing it very tough," Mr Goudswaard said.

"The people and businesses in rural and regional towns who rely on agriculture are really suffering along with the farmers. We need to help them get through this and to ensure they have a real future.

"The program we have developed assists them with their short-term cash flow as well as their long-term future," Mr Goudswaard said.

The ANZ plan gives farmers and rural communities financial assistance in three critical areas: community grants, short-term financial relief and direct financial counselling.

Community Grants

The cash grants will be provided through the Seeds of Renewal program. This program, which is administered by the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, funds small projects in rural communities.

ANZ will significantly increase its funding for Seeds of Renewal to \$1 million in 2007-08.

"Seeds of Renewal will give community organisations up to \$10,000 to fund projects to help their community prepare for, survive and recover from drought," Mr Goudswaard said.

"All projects in 2007 will have a drought theme, but they may contribute to the community in different ways, including creating community enterprise, enabling community growth and momentum or progressing community initiatives on the economy, tourism or culture."

Short-term Financial Relief

As well as the community grants, ANZ continues to work with customers on cash-flow issues.

ANZ offers customers financial relief such as:

- capitalising interest or establishing interest-only repayments on loans;

- loan restructuring to minimise financial outgoings during this adverse trading period and waiving associated fees;
- provision of additional carry-on finance to meet short-term needs;
- waiving fees associated with accessing deposit funds ahead of the maturity date.

“The one thing I would say to customers is to talk to us as soon as possible,” Mr Goudswaard said. “The earlier we’re involved, the more likely it is that together we can get on top of the problems.

“We will continue to look at the individual needs of customers to do what we can to help them through this difficult period.”

Direct Financial Consultations

Mr Goudswaard said: “One of the very understandable things that happens in events like a drought is that farmers and local business people, and individuals focus on the very short-term.

“We know it’s important not to neglect long-term things like superannuation, insurance cover and for farmers, considering diversifying to off-farm income, which may be vital to their survival through the drought and beyond.

“ANZ has developed a free Direct Financial Consultation session to give people the peace of mind that they have all their financial bases covered.

“This one-off, face-to-face session is run by our qualified financial planners. Available to rural Australians, whether they are customers of ANZ or not, this Direct Financial Consultation session covers the financial options available as well as ensuring that people have considered the relevant government support services.”

Customers who wish to find out more about ANZ’s drought relief plan should contact their local branch or call 1800 023 734. Further information can also be found on anz.com at: www.anz.com/australia/rural/Agribusiness/AdverseSeason.asp

About Seeds of Renewal

Seeds of Renewal is a small grants program that encourages eligible not-for-profit organisations from towns with a population of less than 15,000 to apply for funding for projects with a charitable purpose to support renewal. In 2007, Seeds of Renewal will focus on supporting small rural communities severely affected by drought. The Seeds of Renewal program is administered by the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal. Seeds of Renewal provided grants to 105 community projects in 2006. Further information about the Seeds of Renewal program is available at: www.anz.com/australia/rural/CommunityCommitment/seeds.asp

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