



MEDIA RELEASE

ROBERT BROKENSHERE
FAMILY FIRST PRIMARY INDUSTRIES
SPOKESPERSON



51% DROP IN FARM INCOMES: ACTION NEEDED FOR RURAL FAMILIES

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FAMILY FIRST MLC Robert Brokenshere has lamented the Australian Bureau of Statistics "SA Stats" data released at midday yesterday in Canberra which showed:

1. \$596m (51.7%) drop in farm incomes (from 2005-2006 to 2006-2007);
2. a drop from 18.2% to 7.5% of farm exports as a proportion of total exports in the last 5 years;
3. the disappearance of 1/3rd of the farming workforce over the last 10 years, from an average 45,064 employed in the sector in 96-97 to 31,870 in 06-07;
4. a decline in farming incomes from a peak of \$2.4bn in 2001-02 to \$600m in 06-07, back to 96-97 levels without indexation;
5. the worst grape production figures since 99-00 (586,000t.), worst wheat (1,446t) and barley (996t) production figures for at least 10 years;
6. a massive almost 5/6ths drop over 10 years in 'contributing family workers' in agriculture, from 3,406 (7.6% of all employees) in 96-97 to 617 (1.9%) in 06-07, demonstrating our young people see no future on the land.

Mr Brokenshere has written to the Premier calling upon him to conduct an economic and social impact assessment for rural and regional SA in light of these alarming figures. "We need to back up rural and regional SA for the long term", Mr Brokenshere said, "So I am asking the Premier to get his Department to establish the impact on rural and regional communities as a result of this massive drop in income, loss of jobs from and hardship in the sector. We need to establish the impact these losses have had on rural and regional SA and what initiatives need to be put forward to assist rural and regional communities to regrow their economies – and ascertain what social support may be needed in the meantime."

Agriculture is our primary industry and despite the Rann Government's enthusiasm for the mining boom, with the decline in manufacturing and our critical need for food security – that is, to feed ourselves – we must look after this critical industry."

"Minister McEwen may be retiring next election, but SA farmers aren't – we call upon this Labor Government to fight hard over the next 18 months for farming families."

* The Federal Dept Ag Forestry & Fisheries is conducting Drought Hardship forums at Orroroo this morning and Wudinna this afternoon, and conducted a forum yesterday at Keith.

For further information contact: **Robert Brokenshere** on 0419 815 990 or 08 8237 9122.