



BUSINESS COUNCIL  
OF CO-OPERATIVES AND MUTUALS

## PRESS RELEASE

### Game-changing program boosts agricultural co-operation

*14 April 2016:* The Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals (BCCM) welcomed today's announcement of the Federal government's \$13.8 million education pilot aimed at improving farmers' access to information on setting up and running co-operative businesses.

BCCM CEO Melina Morrison said, "Co-operatives help farmers compete in global markets and improve returns to the farmgate. Where family farming is under threat co-operatives can provide a way for smaller producers to unite to gain access to markets that favour larger players".

"Agricultural co-ops cut out the middle guy so all the benefits flow back to the producers. This improves the level of reinvestment on the farm and strengthens the local economy since profits don't leak out of the region."

The Farm Co-operatives and Collaboration Pilot Program, was launched at Northern Rivers dairy co-operative Norco by the Acting Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources Barnaby Joyce and the Member for Page Kevin Hogan.

"Today's announcement is an important step in closing the knowledge gap for producers who want to use this established and successful model of business. It is an unprecedented commitment of funding to level the playing field in terms of access to advice and education on innovative business models," said Ms Morrison.

"The recent Senate inquiry into co-operative, mutual and member-owned firms recommended improving the provision of education and training on co-operatives and called on the government to encourage the establishment of new co-operatives. This program addresses those recommendations in a highly practical way," said Ms Morrison.

The BCCM congratulated Southern Cross University on the announcement that the university will deliver the program including expert advice and information for up to 2000 farmers and 100 farmer groups across the country.

Southern Cross University Vice Chancellor Professor Peter Lee said the University's expertise, combined with the University's focus on collaboration, were key to the approach that will be taken in delivering the project.

"We will establish a national knowledge network of individuals and groups that are focused on supporting the collaborative approaches to agriculture and we will be working with farmers right across the country," said Professor Lee.

"We acknowledge the pivotal role that the Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals occupies in the national landscape, and we look forward to working closely with the peak body to deliver on the outcomes of the Agricultural White Paper."

The pilot program will run until June 2018.

**-Ends-**



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**The Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals (BCCM)** is the national peak body representing the co-operative and mutual models of enterprise. Formed in 2013, the BCCM is led by the chief executives of Australia's co-operative and mutual businesses. The BCCM works to promote the role of member-owned enterprises in the national economy. With an estimated 1700 co-operative and mutual businesses operating nationally representing a total of 14.8 million memberships, the BCCM highlights the contribution co-operatives and mutuals make to the economy and social development in Australia. [www.bccm.coop](http://www.bccm.coop)