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anz, bob katter, joe ludwig, wayne swan

Country brains trust join Rural Finance Roundtable

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ACTING Prime Minister Wayne Swan and Minister for Agriculture Joe Ludwig sat down with man-in-the-hat and Member for Kennedy Bob Katter on Wednesday to hammer out some solutions to Queensland rural finance issues.

The Rural Finance Roundtable organised by Mr Katter also brought together a kind of country brains trust including Dairy Queensland, Rural Bank, ANZ, AgForce Queensland, Commonwealth Treasury and two Brisbane universities.

Mr Katter said the plan was not necessarily to deal with the cause of the financing pressures on rural producers, but the symptoms that came with it.

"This is about stopping the fracture lines spreading across Australia and throughout the Australian economy in a kind of GFC-type meltdown."

Aside from just the commercial side of the farm, it is believed the struggle in scoring funding when needed is also hurting families on the land.

Up to 10 full-time rural counsellors would be dumped after the State Government cut funding needed to pay them.

Mr Ludwig said it was disappointing to see these budgets cut, in light of the financial strain of rural Queenslanders.

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Mr Swan said he was often in regional and rural Queensland and farmers regularly told him they were worried about their finances.

"As someone who grew up in a Queensland farming community, I know first-hand that farmers don't always find it easy dealing with banks," he said.

"Queensland's agricultural sector is on the doorstep of exciting new opportunities through the Asian Century, but there are also some challenges that need to be fully understood first."

The roundtable would wrap up on Thursday.

 anz, bob katter, joe ludwig, wayne swan



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