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media release & photo opportunity

Rural Financial Counsellors Wodonga Office Opening & 1300 834 775 Customer Service Launch

**Wednesday July 15, 2009 – 1.15pm
9/22 Stanley Street, Wodonga**

Joe Helper MP, Minister for Agriculture and Small Business will officially open the Goulburn Murray Hume Agcare's new rural financial counselling offices at 9/22 Stanley Street in Wodonga next Wednesday.

At the opening of the new one-stop rural financial counselling centre, Mr Helper will also launch a new 1300 customer service number, designed to reduce the frustration farmers currently experience when trying to contact the service.

Rural Financial Counsellor Co-ordinator, Paul Blackshaw said the opening of the Wodonga office and new 1300 customer service number will ensure clients get access to the service quickly and easily.

"The opening of the Wodonga office will give our organisation a home. The office facilities are top class, and we can now invite clients into our offices knowing they will feel comfortable in the confidential surroundings."

Mr Blackshaw also said the establishment of the new customer service number - 1300 834 775 will ensure clients will be able to contact the rural financial counselling service regardless of their location.

"In the past, our counsellors have used a mobile phone service as a primary point of contact. This has been frustrating on many occasions, as we work often in areas where the phone signal is patchy at best or drops out completely, which is not a good situation for us or our clients."

"Everyone knows that times are tough on the land at the moment in our region, and certainly we know that there are a lot of farmers in need of our services, and encourage them to give us a call.

"Recently Goulburn Murray Hume Agcare introduced a new Enterprise Action Plan model that guides farmers through a systematic business evaluation process that identifies their immediate and future needs. It has seen many farmers relieved when they do finally make a decision to seek financial counselling through Goulburn Murray Hume Agcare. The professional and streamlined model is designed to help us guide our clients through the decision making process."

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