



MARANOA MAIL

A New Year

I hope you had a wonderful Christmas with family and friends and you were able to relax with some New Year cheer!

A new year means new beginnings and the **parliamentary sittings** are set to resume in a few weeks' time. I'll continue to work hard and be your voice in Federal Parliament and this Coalition Government has real plans to make our nation stronger and to better support you, your family, business and community.



What it means to be Australian

In the lead-up to Australia Day this week, I've found myself contemplating what it means to be Australian.

Australian citizenship should be cherished and entering, or remaining, in Australia is a privilege.

We need to strengthen citizenship laws so they better align with Australian values. That's why I strongly support a tougher citizenship test that would strengthen character requirements for any new potential Australian following concerns that Australia's short-term visa pathways could be exploited by terrorists seeking access to our country.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton has also flagged other reforms for consideration, including dropping the age at which good character provisions apply for citizenship from 18 to 16 years. If young people are breaking the law, I don't think they deserve to part of our society.

At the end of the day, we have secure borders that are envied by most European countries because of this government's strong stance on border protection. These reforms are really about making sure Australia remains safe and I strongly support any move by this government to make our citizenship rules more robust a priority when we head back to Canberra next month.

Australia Day awards and celebrations in Maranoa:

- Check out the damper-baking challenge in the [Balonne Shire](#).
- [Barcaldine Region](#) celebrations include the Madbag Mini Triathlon.
- The [Barcoo](#) celebrates.
- [Blackall-Tambo](#) region community breakfast.
- [Bullo Shire](#) happenings.
- Recognising community achievement in the [Diamantina Shire](#).
- Australia Day Ambassador program in the [Goondiwindi region](#).
- [Longreach region](#)'s community spirit.
- Locals recognised, Aussie-themed golf and a pool party happening in the [Maranoa](#) council region.
- Celebrating Australia in the [Murweh](#).
- Recognising community contribution in the [Paroo Shire](#).
- [Quilpie Shire](#) celebrated at the Bulloo Park.
- Award winners announced, community breakfast, flag raising ceremony, barbecue dinner, bush music and poetry plus more in the [South Burnett](#).
- Markets, awards presentations, thong throwing and good ol' Aussie [Southern Downs](#) entertainment.
- Barbecue breakfast, official proceedings and guest speakers in Cecil Plains, Crows Nest, Clifton, Goombungee, Millmerran and Yarraman in the [Toowoomba region](#) of the Maranoa electorate.
- [Western Downs](#) celebrates with ceremony and awards, musical entertainment, water slides, DIY lamington stands, whip cracking demonstration and more.
- [Winton](#)'s Australia Day celebrations began with a free community barbecue followed by the official ceremony.

Building Better Regions Fund now open

Be sure to submit an application to the Building Better Regions Fund (BBRF) – which is now open – as the entire Maranoa is set to benefit from this new Federal Government funding, specifically targeted to improve and increase liveability in regional communities.

I've advocated for rural communities across my electorate and I believe we're represented in the Coalition Government's new \$297.7 million BBRF as major capital cities have been excluded in the funding's guidelines.

With three regional councils in Maranoa alone contributing more per capita than Brisbane City Council, it makes sense our regions should be supported.

The BBRF has been divided into two streams:

- **Infrastructure Projects Stream:** Investment into the construction of new infrastructure, or upgrade or extension of existing infrastructure. The minimum grant amount of **\$20,000** and a maximum grant amount of **\$10 million**.
Applications close on February 28, 2017.
- **Community Investments Stream:** This government understands our nation is made of more than steel and roads – that's why the Community Investments Stream might help expand a local festival, attract a theatre production or major sporting event to boost local tourism, or it might be leadership or business training for young locals. **Applications close March 31, 2017.**

The BBRF opened on January 18. To access the program's guidelines and to lodge an application visit: www.business.gov.au

Visiting you in your community this month



The region should be so proud to have such a passionate and professional team in South Burnett CTC who support those with a disability, our youth and those doing it tough. They do so much good in the South Burnett and thanks for having me.



I visited Boehringer Ingelheim at their Kingaroy Duboisia farm. This innovative company grows and exports Duboisia to produce pharmaceuticals such as Buscopan. It's also invested in a new harvester engineered in Kingaroy!



Australian tennis royalty celebrating one of Maranoa's greatest Roy Emerson in Blackbutt. Ashley Cooper, Mal Anderson, Wendy Turnbull and – the great man himself – Roy Emerson. Congratulations to the Blackbutt community on driving this great tribute!



I think it's important to keep our flag flying. Thanks to the team at Yallambee Retirement Village in Millmerran for flying the Australian flag I presented them.

Please remember as your Federal Member for Maranoa, I can assist you with a range of issues including:

- Centrelink

To keep up-to-date with what's happening in Maranoa, don't forget to check out my Facebook and Twitter!

- Child support
- Education
- Health and Ageing
- Immigration
- Taxation
- Veterans' Affairs

Until next time!

David



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