



## David Littleproud MP

Federal Member for Maranoa

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# Media Statement

August 6, 2018

### **Immediate Relief for Farming Families in Maranoa takes Drought Relief to \$576 million**

- **Coalition Government announces \$190 million package for immediate drought relief.**
- **The Farm Household Allowance (FHA) will include two lump sum supplementary payments worth up to \$12,000 a year**
- **The FHA assets tests will be changed to allow thousands more farmers to access support.**

Farming families across Maranoa will receive immediate additional financial support to help them and their communities during drought.

The Coalition Government has announced two lump sum supplementary payments to the Farm Household Allowance. Farming families will now receive up to a total of \$28,000 a year in assistance following a boost of up to \$12,000 per annum to FHA for eligible households.

Thousands more farming families will be able to access the FHA as the Coalition increases the net asset threshold cap from \$2.6 million to \$5 million.

Today's announcements bring the total support provided by the Coalition to households and communities in drought to \$576 million, with more to come.

Member for Maranoa David Littleproud MP said the \$190 million package of immediate relief announced today, including support for mental health services, would be welcomed by the farming families doing it tough right across Maranoa.

"We're in this for the long haul and we will stand with our farmers every step of the way," Mr Littleproud said.

"I want to make sure farming families and communities get all the support they need to get through the drought, recover and get back on their feet.

"These extra FHA payments will help get cash in the door so families can pay their bills and get their kids to school. This will flow through to small businesses across Maranoa."

Minister for Agriculture David Littleproud said raising the net assets cap for access to the FHA to \$5 million will help farmers who have little cash flow.

"Owning expensive farm equipment doesn't pay the bills," Mr Littleproud said.

"These threshold changes mean an additional 8000 farmers could become eligible for FHA support."

Additional measures announced today also include;

- An extra \$5 million in the Rural Financial Counselling Service, which will provide additional support for farmers - particularly those applying for the FHA for the first time.
- \$15 million to help the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal with small grants for not-for-profit community groups for locally driven targeted support.
- \$11.4 million in mental health support initiatives including:
  - Additional funding for Primary Health Networks in drought affected areas to cope with increased demand.
  - Those accessing counselling via Skype will no longer have their first appointment in person. This recognises the long distances and the cost of travel in money and time for rural people.
  - An Empowering Communities program that allows local communities to tailor local mental health responses to their needs. Eligible communities can apply for funds up to \$1 million for community-led initiatives that improve mental health and community resilience.
  - Funding will be provided to ReachOUT to go out into drought affected communities and raise awareness of their youth and children's counselling services group.

Minister Littleproud said other long-term measures to improve drought resilience are being developed across government informed by issues raised during his drought listening tour of NSW and Queensland with the Prime Minister.

“Another phase of the Government's drought support will be announced in coming weeks and we will continue to work with farmers, stakeholders and agencies through this crippling drought.”

**Fast facts:**

- **Households eligible for the Farm Household Allowance - a fortnightly payment totalling around \$16,000 a year to help farming families in tough times - will receive two additional lump sum payments on 1 September 2018 and 1 March 2019. Couples will receive up to an additional \$12,000 and single households will receive up to \$7,200.**
- **The change will apply for the remainder of the current financial year, with the review of FHA due back early in 2019 to provide further guidance on this important issue.**
- **Today's announcements bring the total support provided by the Coalition Government to households and communities during the current drought to \$576 million with more to come. This figure is in addition to the concessional drought loans available to farm businesses through the Regional Investment Corporation and there is more to come.**

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