David Littleproud MP
Federal Member for Maranoa

Media Statement

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GPS Farming Technology

GPS positioning can be dangerously inaccurate by as much as five to 10 metres in some instances in Australia. Fortunately, new Federal Government funding will be used to create a new system which will not only help save lives by assisting air medical services to land at rural airstrips regardless of visibility but also help producers map terrain to assist on-farm efficiencies.

Maranoa MP David Littleproud - who represents 42% or rural and remote Queensland - said the Coalition Government's $224.9 million injection over the next four years to improve GPS technology was an absolute game-changer for the bush.

“The Coalition Government has committed to a $300 million space investment package which will be led by Geoscience Australia. This unprecedented amount will significantly improve GPS positioning in the areas which need it most,” Mr Littleproud said.

For aviation in the bush, this investment means improved access to regional areas by enabling planes to land on smaller airstrips and navigate difficult terrain.

"The increased reliability provided by better GPS will improve safety for aircraft flying into regional and remote aerodromes, such as the Royal Flying Doctor Service. It will reduce the impact of weather on flight cancellations and diversions, and improve the safety of landings," Mr Littleproud said.

"What this actually looks like is the Royal Flying Doctors Service landing more safely in remote locations.”

The benefits of the investment also include virtual fencing for farms and better management of cattle and livestock over vast distances. Farmers will be cutting costs and reducing waste by remotely tracking livestock and precisely targeting crops with fertiliser, water and pesticides.

“These are just a handful of the real wold benefits we already know about because of the trial of a Satellite Based Augmentation System (SBAS) currently being led by Geoscience Australia.

"Of the $224.9 million outlined in the Budget, $160.9 million will be used to fund an SBAS for Australia beyond the trial that ends in February 2019," Mr Littleproud said.
An SBAS augments and corrects positioning signals transmitted to Australia by GPS, improving accuracy, availability and reliability.

The remaining $64 million will be used to establish the National Positioning Infrastructure Capability (NPIC). This is a program of work that includes establishing a national ground station network, improving coordination across government and the private sector, and ensuring Australian industry and business have access to world-leading software tools.

The enhanced GPS system will continuously correct positioning data to take account of Australia’s drift northeast rate of about 7cm a year.

"Whether you're a grazier trying to remotely locate a particular location in a largely featureless landscape on your 100,000 hectare property or a RFDS pilot trying to land to pick up a patient on a cloudy day at a remote location, GPS discrepancies are frustrating, inefficient and could cost lives in the bush - that's why this investment to help correct the system is so important," Mr Littleproud said.

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