



## David Littleproud MP

Federal Member for Maranoa

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# Media Statement

20/06/18

### **Coalition Government committed to enhancing telecommunications and improving drought support**

THE Coalition Government is committing \$25 million for a fourth round of the Mobile Black Spot Program, to deliver more coverage to regional and remote communities. We will also be extending the Farm Household Allowance (FHA) from three to four years to help the nation's farmers with a more effective drought support.

For too long, those in the bush had to stand on one foot, on top of a hill in the back paddock trying to pick up a signal. Better mobile coverage helps rural business, tourism, families and communities.

This Coalition Government is the first government to actually put in place a Mobile Black Spot Program. The Coalition has already invested \$220 million into improving mobile coverage in regional and rural Australia and more than 800 towers are being built as a result. In Government, Labor didn't invest a single cent in mobile coverage and didn't fix a single mobile black spot. The Shorten Labor Opposition has no policy to expand mobile coverage should it win Government. They're short on ideas and short on care for rural Australia.

The new round will call for applications from mobile carriers within the coming months, taking input from state, territory and local governments, as well as businesses, community organisations and emergency services. I encourage local residents, councils, businesses and community groups to nominate areas for better mobile coverage.

The drought has been going on for seven years in parts of Queensland. While FHA is essentially an adjustment payment which comes with free financial counselling to help farmers restructure, we believe the extra time will give them more breathing space to implement plans to become financially self-sufficient so they are better placed to sustain their farming businesses.

We will extend the period farmers and their partners will be able to receive FHA from three to four years through the Farm Household Support Amendment Bill 2018. I remind farmers not to self-assess whether they're eligible for FHA – I fear many eligible families have not applied.

The Coalition Government also recently boosted funding of the Rural Financial Counselling Service to more than \$70 million from 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2020 and invested another \$2 million into mental health funding.

We are committed to making sure that the Surat Basin and wider Maranoa community have greater access to telecommunications and financial support to generate their own wealth and build strong, healthy livelihoods.

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