



The Hon. David Littleproud MP

Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources

M E D I A R E L E A S E

Tuesday, 19 June 2018

Improving drought support for Australian farmers

- **Farm Household Support Amendment Bill 2018 introduced to Parliament**
- **The Bill will increase cumulative period farmers qualify for Farm Household allowance from three to four years**
- **Minister Littleproud will hold drought roundtable with key farming stakeholders to discuss long-term drought policy**

The Coalition Government will extend the Farm Household Allowance (FHA) from three to four years to help the nation's farmers with a more effective drought support.

Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources David Littleproud said the changes followed the drought listening tour with the Prime Minister a fortnight ago.

"Farmers said extending FHA was a sensible measure which would help them, and we listened," Minister Littleproud said.

"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, four years is a more appropriate timeframe to do this.

"This 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.

"We will also hold a drought roundtable in coming weeks with key farming stakeholders, including the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) and state farming groups.

"This roundtable will discuss long-term drought policy and strategy in the context of building resilience and drought preparedness during a changing climate."

More announcements are likely in coming weeks. The Coalition Government already provides a range of support measures to assist farming families in hardship. These include FHA, the Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) and Drought Assistance Concessional Loans.

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. This will make sure the program keeps up with demand and will help farming communities to generate their own wealth and build strong, healthy livelihoods.

For more information on the support available for farmers, visit: <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/assistance/sup-farmers-rural-communities-drought>

Fast Facts:

- Since FHA was launched in July 2014 it has helped more than 7,900 people at a cost of more than \$230 million
- More than \$834 million in concessional loans have been approved to 1,527 farm businesses and the RFCS assists around 4,500 people each year.
- More than 80 per cent of those farmers surveyed about the FHA have said they are satisfied with the structure and assistance it provides.
- It is important farmers do not self-assess, Please seek advice from the Department of Human Services Farmer Assistance Hotline on 13 23 16.
- The Coalition Government has boosted its funding commitment to the RFCS program to more than \$70 million from 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2020.
- Through the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper, the Coalition Government has provided:
 - The Farm Business Concessional Loans Scheme,
 - Farm Household Allowance,
 - The Rural Financial Counselling Service, and
 - Support to manage the effects of pest animals and weeds in drought-affected areas.
- The Coalition Government's concessional loan programs have provided more than \$834 million in loans to 1,527 farm businesses.
- The government will continue to support Australian farmers through the Regional Investment Corporation, which will deliver a nationally-consistent loans program
- The RFCS assists around 4,500 clients each year, with around 3,000 clients receiving assistance at any one time.
- The Coalition Government has delivered \$20.4 million to extend RFCS provider contracts to 30 June 2020