



**The Hon. David Littleproud MP**  
**Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources**

**M E D I A   R E L E A S E**

## **More support for farmers in drought**

- **Coalition Government launches Farm Liaison Officer to better connect farmers to drought assistance as part of our ongoing work with farmers in drought.**
- **Farm Liaison Officer to be based in Longreach and will work across targeted drought affected communities in QLD and NSW.**
- **This is a two year pilot program following the Prime Minister and Agriculture Minister's drought tour.**

The Coalition Government continues to roll out more help for farmers facing drought across Queensland and New South Wales, with a newly created Farm Liaison Officer role based in Longreach.

The Farm Liaison Officer will help connect farmers, businesses and communities with the support of the Rural Financial Counselling Service and community assistance measures.

Minister for Agriculture David Littleproud said the move follows frank conversations with drought affected farmers during his recent drought tour with the Prime Minister.

“The Farm Liaison Officer will work to better connect farmers, businesses and communities to existing support measures,” Mr Littleproud said.

“For example, the Farm Liaison Officer would help connect people to Rural Financial Counsellors, who help farmers apply for Farm Household Allowance.

“It will be crucial for this Liaison Officer to get farmers’ feedback on these measures back to Government as quickly as possible.

“Data collected by the Liaison Officer will help build a better picture of client’s circumstances before, during and after accessing federal support measures to better inform government.

“The Farm Liaison Officer will be based in Longreach and travel between the four RFCS regions of Queensland North, Queensland Southern, NSW Central and NSW Northern.”

The Farm Liaison Officer position will run over two years as part of a pilot program thanks to \$750,000 in federal funding.

Mr Littleproud said the Coalition Government also recently announced an additional \$20 million to extend the Rural Financial Counselling Service to 2020.

“The RFCS is an essential service, currently helping around 4,500 clients each year,” Mr Littleproud said.

“In a recent survey around two thirds of clients said the RFCS had helped improve their financial situation.”

Since 2013, the Coalition Government has provided more than \$1.3 billion in assistance measures to help farmers and communities in drought and the Farm Household Allowance has helped over 7,900 recipients.

For more information on the RFCS visit [agriculture.gov.au/rfcs](http://agriculture.gov.au/rfcs) or call 1800 686 175.

#### **RFCS contact information by state:**

- **NSW Central** - Phone: 1800 940 404  
Fax: 02 6884 4926  
Website: [www.rfcscr.com.au](http://www.rfcscr.com.au)
- **NSW Northern** - Phone: 02 6662 5055  
Fax: 02 6662 4105  
Website: [www.rfcsnr.org.au](http://www.rfcsnr.org.au)
- **QLD Northern** - Phone: 07 4652 5666  
Fax: 07 4652 5699  
Website: [www.rfcsnq.com.au](http://www.rfcsnq.com.au)
- **QLD Southern** - Phone: 07 4622 5500  
Fax: 07 4622 3699  
Website: [www.rfcssq.org.au](http://www.rfcssq.org.au)

#### **Fast facts:**

- **The RFCS assists around 4,500 clients each year, with around 3,000 clients receiving assistance at any point in time.**
- **The Coalition Government has delivered \$17 million to extend RFCS provider contracts to 30 June 2020 and a further \$3.4 million to meet demand.**
- **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 made available a range of social and business support measures including**
  - **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.**
- **Since Farm Household Allowance was launched on 1 July 2014, it has helped around 7,900 recipients. It is important farmers do not self-assess, but instead seek advice from the Department of Human Services Farmer Assistance Hotline on 13 23 16.**
- **Through the Coalition’s concessional loan programs, more than \$834m in loans has been approved to 1,527 farm businesses (as at 30 April 2018).**
- **The government will continue to support Australian farmers through the establishment of the Regional Investment Corporation, which will deliver a nationally-consistent loans program.**

#### **Media contact**

[Les White](#), 0409 805 122