



**The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP**  
Prime Minister

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

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

7 June 2018

### **Funding extended for farmer support services**

- Coalition Government investing an additional \$20 million in total to extend all RFCS provider contracts to 30 June 2020 and to meet continued demand.
- Brings total commitment to more than \$70 million in four years.

Farmers across the country in financial hardship or drought will benefit from around \$20 million in additional funding to extend the Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS), working alongside farmers for more than 30 years.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull joined Minister for Agriculture David Littleproud in Central West NSW and Central West and South West Queensland this week to chat to drought affected locals and RFCS counsellors.

“This funding demonstrates the Coalition Government’s commitment to supporting our farming communities to generate their own wealth and build strong, healthy livelihoods,” Mr Turnbull said.

“The Coalition Government has delivered \$17 million to extend RFCS provider contracts to 30 June 2020 and a further \$3.4 million to meet continued demand, bringing the total to more than \$70 million over four years to the RFCS.”

Minister Littleproud said the RFCS extension would be welcomed by communities across the country, with around two thirds of clients stating the service had helped build resilience in their businesses.

“The feedback speaks for itself: the program is working and as dry conditions continue the service must too,” Minister Littleproud said.

“Each year around 4,500 clients seek help from the RFCS. Counsellors sit down with clients at the kitchen table to talk it out, make a plan for the future and prepare for meetings with lenders, debt mediators and accountants.

“The counsellors also provide vital information about other assistance such as the government’s Farm Household Allowance and support to reach their goals while on payment.

“The FHA has helped over 7,900 recipients so far. Around 85 per cent of people coming off farm support said they are satisfied with the path ahead, which would indicate the program is working well.

“Farmers are some of Australia’s hardest working, resourceful and resilient people, who keep plugging away no matter what Mother-Nature throws at them, but sometimes you just need a bit extra support.”

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

## 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 immediate boost, over two years to meet additional demand and better target communications.
- 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 \$834 million 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.