



**Andrew Gee MP**

Federal Member for Calare

Our Ref: AB18/09.319

Mr Graeme Faulkner  
General Manager  
Lithgow City Council  
Email: trinity.newton@lithgow.nsw.gov.au

**SENT VIA EMAIL**

Dear Mr Faulkner

Please find **enclosed** correspondence received by my office from the Hon David Littleproud MP, Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, regarding drought assistance in NSW.

I trust this information is of assistance.

If I can be of assistance with any other matters, please do not hesitate to contact my office again in the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Gee MP  
Federal Member for Calare

24 January 2019





18/09.319

## The Hon. David Littleproud MP

Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources  
Federal Member for Maranoa

RECEIVED  
14 JAN 2019

Ref: MC18-036764

17 DEC 2018

Mr Andrew Gee MP  
Member for Calare  
PO Box 54  
BATHURST NSW 2795

Dear Mr Gee

Thank you for your representation of 21 November 2018 on behalf of Mr Graeme Faulkner, Lithgow City Council General Manager, about drought assistance in New South Wales.

I am aware that some New South Wales farmers continue to feel the devastating and far reaching effects of drought. I have seen first-hand how poor conditions can affect individuals, farm businesses and entire communities. I am proud of the resilience of our farmers, but I understand sometimes some of our farmers need assistance to face the challenges that come with life on the land.

The Australian Government is committed to supporting farmers experiencing hardship, including drought. We make a range of social and business support measures available to help farmers and their families manage through tough times. Our programs aim to build resilience and capacity and encourage better farmer preparedness to manage known risks. The better our farmers can prepare for, manage through and recover from any adverse situation, the stronger our agriculture sector's contribution to the economy will be.

I note that Lithgow City Council has resolved to ask both the State and Australian Governments to provide grants to farmers affected by drought in lieu of no interest and low interest loans.

I am happy to inform Mr Faulkner that assistance is already available. An important component of the Australian Government's support for the agricultural sector is the Farm Household Allowance (FHA) program. The FHA program commenced in 2014. It helps farmers cope with financial pressures while they get back on their feet, provides one-on-one case support, activity supplements for planning and training to make long-term financial improvements, and income support for up to four cumulative years. When paid at the maximum rate to both members of a household it delivers more than \$100,000 in regular payments, plus up to \$1,500 is available for a financial professional to assess the business, and up to \$4,000 is available per person to purchase advice or undertake training.

The FHA program is demand driven, so no-one who applies and is eligible will miss out on support. Eligibility is based on individual circumstances, regardless of the cause of hardship and does not require a drought declaration.

The Australian Government is also currently offering two lump sum payments to eligible FHA recipients to help them manage through the current drought. Up to \$12,000 is payable to farm households if eligible for FHA at any time between 1 September and 1 December 2018 (now closed) and 2 December 2018 and 1 June 2019. These are additional to a FHA recipient's regular fortnightly FHA payments.



I also note that Lithgow City Council resolved to call on both the Australian and New South Wales Governments to refine the assistance distribution networks to farmers.

On 19 August 2018, the Australian Government announced the appointment of a Coordinator-General for Drought, Major General Stephen Day, DSC, AM, to engage across all levels of government, the private sector, philanthropic organisations, and with communities and farmers.

Major General Day is working with the Government to facilitate coordination of service delivery, including the Drought Commissioners in New South Wales and Queensland, the Farm Liaison Officers appointed in New South Wales and Queensland by my department, and relevant agencies in other states. He is being supported by the Joint Agency Drought Taskforce, established within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

This year alone the Australian Government has also committed many billions of dollars in new assistance, additional funding and improvements to existing support. This includes:

- the \$5 billion Future Drought Fund, to provide ongoing and sustainable funding to enhance future drought resilience, preparedness and response across Australia;
- the Rural Financial Counselling Service, which provides free financial counselling to farmers and small related businesses in, or at risk of, financial hardship;
- the Drought Communities Programme, which supports communities in drought-affected areas through local infrastructure projects and other drought-relief activities;
- increased investment by over \$500 million from nearly \$2.6 billion to over \$3 billion to build the water infrastructure needed for the 21st century;
- funding for dog fencing and weed removal in drought-affected areas;
- enhanced localised weather and climate forecasting services to help prepare for drought;
- investments in water infrastructure to provide greater water security, including funding for emergency water infrastructure on farm;
- greater localised support for rural mental health services and community organisations; and
- funding the National Farmers' Federation to deliver a one-stop-shop "Farm Hub" website to ensure farmers facing hardship are able source support information easily.

Thank you for bringing Mr Faulner's concerns to my attention. I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



**DAVID LITTLEPROUD MP**