



## The Hon Damian Drum MP

Federal Member for Nicholls

### For Immediate Release

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## MEDIA RELEASE

### Immediate assistance is available in Nicholls

Communities in Nicholls will have greater access to drought assistance, thanks to a Liberal-National Government package worth nearly \$100 million.

The Coalition Government is responding to the ongoing drought with direct and immediate support to help farming families and communities.

Mr. Drum said \$33.4 million had been made available through the Drought Community Support Initiative to provide immediate financial assistance to eligible households in hardship.

“Farming households can receive up to \$3,000 to spend in their local communities to cover urgent bills such as food, petrol and utilities, taking stress off families and boosting the local economy,” Mr. Drum said.

“The effects of the drought are not just felt on the farm – regional communities and businesses suffer as people spend less in towns.

The Coalition Government will work with the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul Society to make sure this money hits the ground quickly and gets to those most in need.

**Under the Drought Communities Programme Extension another 13 councils will have access to up to \$1 million each to complete local infrastructure and drought-relief projects, including the Strathbogie Shire in our electorate of Nicholls.**

“This will boost the economy in our region, create jobs, engage local businesses and provide a long-lasting benefit to the community and the rural industries it depends on,” Mr. Drum said.

The government will also simplify Farm Household Allowance applications. The changes will remove business income reconciliation, change the time limit on payment to four years in every ten, simplify the assets test and recognise agistment.

“These changes will make FHA quicker and easier to access,” Mr Drum said.

The government also announced an injection of \$740,000 of contingency funding to five Rural Financial Counselling Service providers who are experiencing pressure from increased demand.

“It’s really important that those in need of support do not self-assess their eligibility and instead seek advice from an expert, like a rural financial counsellor.”

For more information and to apply for assistance visit <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought> or call 1800 900 090.

**ENDS**

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