



**Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie**  
Deputy Leader of The Nationals  
Minister for Regional Services  
Minister for Sport  
Minister for Local Government and Decentralisation  
Senator for Victoria

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **HITTING THE ROAD IN SUPPORT OF DROUGHT-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES**

10 January 2019

The Liberal and Nationals Government is partnering with NBN Co to help farmers and local businesses in drought-affected areas access support.

Minister for Regional Services, Sport, Local Government and Decentralisation Bridget McKenzie said the Liberal and Nationals Government would be using NBN Co's Sky Muster satellite vehicles to provide a free WiFi service to assist in lodging online claims for drought assistance at outreach events across New South Wales.

"I urge anyone affected by the drought to attend local outreach activities, where a variety of support services will provide representatives to assess individual situations and provide advice," Minister McKenzie said.

"I also want to remind people who may be feeling the pinch at this time of year that there are a range of community mental health and telehealth services available to regional Australians to support them in this trying time.

"This outreach is about putting communities in touch with support networks such as Government agencies, charity groups and other organisations that can provide or facilitate crucial support services.

"Representatives from Australian Government agencies will be in attendance to provide assistance to enable people to access the range of support available.

“Representatives from the Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul Society and Rotary Australia World Community Service have also been invited to attend to distribute a range of immediate support as part of the Government’s \$30 million Drought Community Support Initiative for people across parts of drought-affected parts of Australia.”

The outreach will occur from mid-January through to March, kicking off from 15 January in West Wyalong, Condobolin, Parkes and Forbes.

“People are doing it tough, and some are reluctant to ask for help because they think other people are worse off than them, but there is plenty of support to go around,” Minister McKenzie said.

“We have established a \$5 billion Future Drought Fund that guarantees support against future droughts faced by farmers and communities in rural and regional Australia along with boosting the Drought Communities Program and increased the number of local councils that can apply for funding up to 81. This provides an opportunity for each of these communities to invest \$1 million to stimulate their local economies

“Information will also be available about the Government’s range of other support measures, including the Farm Household Allowance, tax assistance measures, farm investment and drought loans, employment assistance, insurance rebates and the Rural Financial Counselling Service.

“The importance of better regional telecommunications cannot be over-estimated. Since being elected, our government prioritised the roll-out of the NBN in regional Australia with around 98% of regional homes, farms and businesses now able to connect or under construction.

“It is fantastic to see NBN Co getting behind drought-affected communities as the company continues to rollout Sky Muster satellite internet to regional areas – over 93,000 active services to date.”

More information on the Liberal and Nationals Government’s drought support initiatives is available at [www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought](http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought).

#### **Outreach session details:**

<b>Location</b>	<b>LGA</b>	<b>Date</b>
West Wyalong	Bland	15-Jan
Condobolin	Lachlan	16-Jan
Parkes AM/ Forbes PM	Parkes/Forbes	17-Jan
Scone	Upper Hunter	5-Feb
Narrabri	Narrabri Shire	6-Feb
Mungindi	Moree Plains Shire	7-Feb
Walgett	Walgett Shire	12-Feb
Bourke	Bourke Shire	13-Feb
Brewarrina	Brewarrina Shire	14-Feb
Gunnedah	Gunnedah Shire	19-Feb
Dubbo	Dubbo Shire	20-Feb

Gilgandra	Gilgandra Shire	21-Feb
Coonabarabran	Warrumbungle Shire	26-Feb
Coonamble	Coonamble Shire	27-Feb
Lightning Ridge	Walgett Shire	28-Feb
Narromine	Narromine Shire	5-Mar
Nyngan	Bogan Shire	6-Mar
Cobar	Cobar Shire	7-Mar
Wilcannia	Central Darling	12-Mar
Broken Hill	Broken Hill Shire	13-Mar
Wentworth	Wentworth Shire	14-Mar

**ENDS**

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