

From: [Spencer, Nicole](#)
To: s22
Subject: Alan Jones as discussed [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Monday, 30 September 2019 2:48:00 PM

OFFICIAL

Joel Fitzgibbon questions where drought funding is going The federal opposition is questioning where some of the allocated drought funding is going. It comes as a councillor in the Moyne shire in south-west Victoria says the council there doesn't need the one million dollar assistance because he says the region isn't in drought.
<https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/nsw-country-hour/joel-fitzgibbon-questions-where-drought-funding-is-going/11560162>

- **Alan Jones comes down hard on PM's drought relief package** Alan Jones has criticised the Prime Minister's new drought relief project, claiming the numbers just don't add up.
<https://www.4bc.com.au/alan-jones-comes-down-hard-on-pms-drought-relief-package/>

Nicole Spencer | Assistant Secretary
Infrastructure, Population, Agriculture and Regional Development
Industry, Infrastructure and Environment Division | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

s22

| w. www.pmc.gov.au

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s22

s22

From: s22
Sent: Monday, 30 September 2019 1:22 PM
To: Campbell, Alistair
Cc: Wilson, Helen; Spencer, Nicole; Agriculture
Subject: Drought points for Secretary s22

PROTECTED//CABINET

Hi Al

s47E(d)

- The Prime Minister announced a number of further drought support measures on Friday, 27 September 2019, including a \$13 million extension to the Drought Communities Programme; a \$33 million extension to the Drought Community Support Initiative; and changes to the Farm Household Allowance

s34(3)

s47C, 47E(d)

Cheers

s22

s22

Agriculture, Population and Regional Development
Industry, Infrastructure and Environment Division
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

s22

s22

From: s22
Sent: Friday, 27 September 2019 2:55 PM
To: s22
Subject: Drought Relief announcement [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s22

Is it possible to get a list of the 13 (additional?) LGAs to receive the drought relief announced today.

s47C, s47E(d)

Happy to discuss
Thanks

s22

s22 Adviser
Education Branch | Social Policy Division
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

s22

| w. www.pmc.gov.au



The Department acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respect to their Cultures, Country and Elders both past and present.

s22

From: s22
Sent: Monday, 30 September 2019 11:50 AM
To: Duggan, Simon
Cc: s22; Wilson, Helen; Spencer, Nicole; Agriculture
Subject: s47E(d)
Attachments: s34(1)(d) s22

s22

Hi Simon

s22

s47E(d)

- The Prime Minister announced a number of further drought support measures on Friday, 27 September 2019, including a \$13 million extension to the Drought Communities Programme; a \$33 million extension to the Drought Community Support Initiative; and changes to the Farm Household Allowance.

s34(3)

Please let us know if you have any concerns with these points – ideally by **1pm**, if possible s22

Cheers

s22

From: Duggan, Simon <Simon.Duggan@pmc.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 30 September 2019 8:30 AM
To: s22
Cc: Wilson, Helen <Helen.Wilson@pmc.gov.au>; Spencer, Nicole <Nicole.Spencer@pmc.gov.au>
Subject: RE: PM key priorities fortnightly briefs - 27 Sep [s22]

s22

Hi s22

From: s22
To: [Communications Policy](#); s22
[Infrastructure](#)
Subject: FW: Prime Minister - Joint Media Release - Backing Our Farmers and Drought Affected Communities - Friday 27 September 2019 [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]
Date: Friday, 27 September 2019 7:02:57 AM

From: PMO - Media
Sent: Friday, 27 September 2019 7:02:51 AM (UTC+10:00) Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney
Subject: Prime Minister - Joint Media Release - Backing Our Farmers and Drought Affected Communities - Friday 27 September 2019 [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

UNOFFICIAL



THE HON. SCOTT MORRISON MP
PRIME MINISTER

THE HON. MICHAEL MCCORMACK MP
MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE, TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
LEADER OF THE NATIONALS

SENATOR THE HON. BRIDGET MCKENZIE
MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

THE HON. DAVID LITTLEPROUD MP
MINISTER FOR WATER RESOURCES, DROUGHT, RURAL FINANCE, NATURAL
DISASTER AND EMERGENCY MANGEMENT

FRIDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2019

BACKING OUR FARMERS AND DROUGHT AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

Farmers and their communities will have access to more support with the Coalition Government announcing it will provide more funding, cut red tape and increase services.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said a new support package will deliver nearly \$100 million to drought-hit communities, which is on top of more than \$7 billion in drought support funding

already provided by the Government.

“Supporting drought affected communities remains our Government’s most urgent priority,” the Prime Minister said.

“I know that things are only getting harder for many farmers and rural communities, and that’s why we are taking further action and providing even more support.

“We’ve been in constant contact with farmers and businesses, and we’re using their feedback to keep improving our response.

“As I’ve said before, this isn’t set and forget. We need to keep listening and keep taking action.

“We know we can’t make it rain, but we must keep finding ways to do everything we can to make life just a bit easier and remove some of the burden. That’s why our Government is providing more money to help people with bills, more money for counselling and more money to local councils.

“We’ve got to get more cash into these communities and cut more red tape, making it easier to access support.

“I will do everything in my power to ease the burden on farmers and their communities. That’s our Government’s promise.”

Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack said the package of measures would provide an immediate economic stimulus at the local level as well as employment for people whose work has been affected by drought.

“We are delivering \$33.42 million to resume the Drought Community Support Initiative, which will deliver up to \$3000 to eligible farming households experiencing hardship due to drought,” the Deputy Prime Minister said.

“And we are providing a \$13 million extension to the Drought Community Programme to deliver support at the local government level where it counts.

“Thirteen Local Government Areas will be provided up to \$1 million for local infrastructure and drought relief products.”

Minister for Agriculture, Senator Bridget McKenzie, said targeted relief followed careful assessment of the current challenges farmers were facing.

“We know that FHA is a vital hand-up for farmers in times of need—but the Independent Review of Farm Household Allowance told us it could be improved,” Minister McKenzie said.

“Farming families have told me that the FHA program does not currently treat them as business owners and places a real burden on farmers already doing it tough. This was reflected in the review.

“Today we are announcing a radical simplification of the FHA application process and key settings.

“We will remove the requirement for business income reconciliation, change the time limit on payment from four years in total to four out of every ten years, simplify the assets test, recognise agistment as being part of primary production income, and redesign the application process. For the first time, couples will be able to apply for the payment using just one application.

“These changes will make FHA quicker and easier to access, better reflect the nature of farm businesses, and to acknowledge that farmers may experience more than one period of hardship in their lifetime.

“Some of these changes will require amendments to legislation, but through Centrelink we will implement as many of the changes to the application process immediately.”

Minister McKenzie also announced today an injection of \$740,000 of contingency funding to five Rural Financial Counselling Service providers who are experiencing pressure from increased demand for their services.

Minister for Drought David Littleproud said the Coalition Government was delivering a comprehensive suite of support measures to farmers in hardship.

“This shows our commitment to stay flexible and respond as needed,” Minister Littleproud said.

“Today’s announcement further strengthens our drought response which includes concessional loans, farm management deposits, tax breaks, and mental health support.

“The government is already providing more than \$7 billion in assistance and concessional loans to support those affected by drought.”

“This shows the Coalition Government’s commitment and belief in hard working farming families.”

[END]

Contacts:

Prime Minister’s Press Office, (02) 6277 7744

s22



Press Office of the Hon Scott Morrison MP, Prime Minister, Canberra

s22

From: s22
Sent: Friday, 27 September 2019 8:38 PM
To: Communications Policy; s22
 Infrastructure
Subject: FW: Prime Minister - Transcript - Doorstop Interview - Dalby, Queensland - Friday 27 September 2019 [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

From: PMO - Media
Sent: Friday, 27 September 2019 8:37:35 PM (UTC+10:00) Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney
Subject: Prime Minister - Transcript - Doorstop Interview - Dalby, Queensland - Friday 27 September 2019 [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

UNOFFICIAL



THE HON SCOTT MORRISON MP
 PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT
DOORSTOP INTERVIEW
DALBY, QUEENSLAND
FRIDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2019

TOPICS: *Drought assistance; Farm Household Allowance; Drought Envoy; RBA cash rate; Saudi-Arabian comments; Jock Palfreedman; ACT cannabis legislation; AFL grandfinal.*

EO&E...

DAVID LITTLEPROUD: Well, welcome, firstly, the Prime Minister who only touched down this morning, had a quick [inaudible] and up to Queensland. Hence is the responsibility that he has borne since he became Prime Minister. Three days after being sworn in, was in Quilpie. We have never forgotten about this drought and we continue to be agile and we continue to consult and listen. And today we're making further announcements on top of what we've already put out there: a commitment of over seven billion dollars. It is real money. It's going to go and hit the ground of regional rural communities to get these communities and get farmers through this drought. We will not stop and we'll continue to work with communities and primary producers to make sure that the response is adequate. Let me make this clear. It will rain and, when it rains, we're going to make a lot of money. But we've got a lot of families to get through - through this drought and we're going to make sure we work with them. And today is about making sure that they understand you have a government that is standing shoulder to shoulder with you. That is going to make sure we do our utmost to support you and your community. And can I also welcome Jack, from, a Fiver from a Farmer. A real national hero. \$1.6 million this young man has raised. It goes to show what a great country we live in, when a young man with one idea can do so much for these communities. And I represent a lot of them, Jack, and I can tell you it means more than what the government gives sometimes, because it comes from someone from Sydney, just to show that they

care. And that's a fantastic thing you've done. You should be so proud and so should your family. To Senator-my good mate, Bridget McKenzie, to the mayor, it's great to have you here and to Dave Gooding, thank you for having us, and from AgForce, Brendan Taylor. This is about letting the entire community, not just the Western Downs know that we are here with you. So PM, thank you for coming.

PRIME MINISTER: Thanks mate. Thanks David. Well, it's great to be here with everyone, particularly great to be here with Jack, who we flew up from Sydney together this morning. Jack and I met on the radio a little while ago.

JACK BERNE: Yeah.

PRIME MINISTER: Benny Fordham and I, we set you up a bit.

JACK BERNE: Yeah.

PRIME MINISTER: Got a good rise out of you. But I said we'd meet and here we are, we've flown up today and thought it was a good opportunity for Jack and I to have a talk about what the government's doing because that's what he wanted to know about, and there was no better way to show that than coming here today and seeing what we're doing on the ground. It was just around about a year ago when we had our National Drought Summit and following that National Drought Summit which brought together people from right across the country, all states and territories, those in the farming communities, those who are in scientific communities, corporate sector, agribusiness, all came together at Old Parliament House and what flowed from that was a multi-channel flow of support; whether it was on new programs in how we're managing our weather information and how we're collecting and reporting that information, what we're doing in geoscience, importantly, the significant support that was being provided through the Farm Household Allowance, extending our support on mental health, the financial counsellors, and the work we were doing there. Our water infrastructure was – some \$50 million we put into on-farm water infrastructure grants; \$750 million going into water, bigger water infrastructure, larger-scale projects. You know, we've currently got almost a billion dollars right now committed in projects, many of them underway as we speak on some 21 major water infrastructure projects around the country today. And we've got about 50 more plus, which are being assessed in partnership with state and territory governments. So whether it's water infrastructure, whether it's the science, whether it's the important income support that goes into communities, a big part of that plan was what we put into community organisations at two levels: the charitable organisations, not unlike what Jack's been doing, but through Vinnies and organisations- and the Salvos, we put that initial \$30 million in, and we also put money into things like bores and pests and weeds. So, my point is, it has been a comprehensive response to this point in time. The Future Drought Fund which we were able to pass through the Parliament, provides ongoing support drawing down \$100 million every year to go into important water infrastructure projects and that will rise to \$5 billion in the future, in terms of the overall capital fund. So, it's been a comprehensive response. But we said at the time that when we made our response, it wasn't set-and-forget; that we would continue to listen, that we would continue to respond and as- so long as the drought goes on, then so does our response and, frankly, beyond that. Because then there's the rebuilding that follows after the drought breaks and taking the opportunities for farming communities right across Australia to get strongly back on their feet. And so part of that response is what we're announcing today, and we had the Farm Household Allowance review, and I'll ask Bridget to speak more to what it found. We've got some 56 million in estimate- additional assistance will be going into farming families because of- we're going to loosen up, make more flexible, the Farm Household Allowance payments; more flexible on things like off-farm income, agistment, things like this, and to ensure that it is more accessible, more readily available. And that will lead to some \$56 million, we estimate, over the next few years which will deliver more money in the pockets of farmers right across the country as they continue to deal with what, in Queensland, has been seven years of drought. The second part is extending our community support program. We already had over 100 councils - 111, I think, to be specific - who would receive the million dollars each to support local works in their communities; and that can be everything from water carting to important local capital works projects that keeps contractors and others locally employed. Now, we're putting another 13 of those councils on that list and that includes councils here in Queensland, down in Victoria, across into South Australia, and New South Wales of course, where the drought is particularly severe. And so that program continues and there'll be some 123 councils and that's another \$13 million that goes into that program. The other program is backing again the Salvos and Vinnies with an additional \$30 million and some additional support to help them administer this

funding. And that 30 million is just going in programs in local communities and drought-affected areas all across the country. All up, this is around about \$100 million, just over it in fact, that will be going in. And just over 40% of that will actually be spent in this financial year - this very financial year. So there won't be any delay, particularly on the Farm Household Allowance. That kicks in once we get the legislation through the Parliament and that will be a high priority when we get back into Parliament in a couple of weeks from now. So that's a further response. It's not set-and-forget, our drought response, it's ongoing. We are listening very carefully. That's why we're here today. That's why my feet barely touched the ground after getting back from New York yesterday and straight back up here, to both commend Dave and his family on the amazing work they do, living through this drought. And it's always great, even when you come to places like this and people talk to you with optimism, just like Dave was saying, looking forward to the rain, planning for it, being ready when the conditions permit, and to be able to get out there and make things happen. And that gives us a lot of encouragement, doesn't it mate.

JACK BERNE: Yeah.

PRIME MINISTER: So what do you think about being up here? This is about the fourth or fifth district you've been to?

JACK BERNE: Yeah, it's really amazing and thank you very much for taking me up here. It's a great experience because I come from the northern beaches so there's no farms around. I live on the beach and I'm very fortunate for that. Um, but to see how bad it is out here and seeing where all the money goes is really amazing, just to help out the farmers that really need help. So thank you for having me.

PRIME MINISTER: Good boy. Top bloke.

(Applause)

PRIME MINISTER: Bridget, come and tell us more about the allowance program -

BRIDGET McKENZIE: Yeah, sure. Well, our future is in bright hands, isn't it, when someone like Jack really stands up and - and calls us all to action. Dave, thanks for having us and lovely to meet your next generation on this farm. And our government's doing everything we can do to make sure that farming families like yours are able to continue to produce fabulous, safe, clean green product that we love to enjoy here at home but, importantly, are going to increase in the export to markets around the world in the coming decades. As Agriculture Minister, I'm in charge of the Farm Household Allowance. This is our government's number one program to get money onto the tables, into the pockets and bank accounts of our farming families who are doing it tough. And we have continually adapted this program over the four years that it's been in place. But following the review instigated by David Littleproud last year and made public in May, our government's responding to each and every one of those six recommendations in a very fulsome way. We're radically simplifying access and eligibility criteria to Farm Household Allowance. When I'm out on the ground talking to farmers, as far as I can remember, there is sort of a lot of chatter out there around how difficult it is to apply for and "You'll never be eligible", etcetera, etcetera. Well, it's actually not true. And for those, over 34,000 farmers out there across rural and regional Australia who are eligible, I would ask you to get in touch with your rural financial counsellor and make sure you're going through the process and the simplified assessment process that we're instigating on the back of this review to ensure that that happens. We're also making some changes to how we assess and treat on-farm and off-farm income, off-farm asset classes and also, if your farm's making a loss, how we treat that in combination to actually sort of flatten out the variability of income that's heading into farm households, as they're having to traditionally do that fortnightly reconciliation with Centrelink, which has driven everybody mad. So we're getting rid of that, making sure that you will have certainty around your payments. And we're also recognising that you just don't go through one drought in your lifetime as a farmer in this country. Every couple of decades we do it tough as a community, and so rather than this form of assistance being only available four years out of your entire lifetime, we're making sure that you can access this vital payment for four years in every decade, which really, I think, goes to the reality of farming in a country like Australia, because we don't want to make sure that you're on Farm Household Allowance for your entire career but that it is a much needed stopgap

and support to ensure that your farm and your farm business can get back on to a sustainable footing, which is why we're also announcing today an additional, out of our contingency funding, \$740,000 to give those regions who are doing it specifically tough, getting more rural financial counsellors and services rolled out in places like here in David Littleproud's electorate, down in Central West New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, Northern Territory and South Australia; making sure that farmers that need that financial assistance, to make those tough decisions in times like this when you're going through hardship: Am I going to get serious about succession planning? Am I going to make system changes on farms to make this business sustainable going forward or am I going to sell up and do something else? And our government has a suite of measures to assist you to do all of those because we want you sustainably farming, going forward and making the best decisions for your family and your businesses. So, as the PM said, we are not a government that does this lightly. We are embedded in the future of rural and regional Australia communities and agriculture, not just now in the drought but for decades to come and we are tireless in our efforts to do that. Thank you.

DAVID LITTLEPROUD: I might just ask the Mayor of Western Downs, this million dollars that is going to go into further in regional councils. Well, one of them is right here, Western Downs. This is a stimulus that's about driving the business sector in town, keeping people employed and making sure there's a legacy out of what's being built out there.

MAYOR PAUL McVEIGH: Thanks David. Well, first, a very, very big thank you to the Prime Minister. What a great effort to be flying back from America last night and to be here in our paddocks in our region today. And we thank you too, Minister McKenzie and Minister Littleproud. I see everyone out here shaking flies off at the moment and that's - we call them harvest flies, for anyone that doesn't know that. And, unfortunately, Prime Minister, as you've been down the paddock, there'll be no harvest this year in our region and across heaps of the states, across the eastern parts of Australia. So a very, very big thank you to the Federal Government and to our Prime Minister and to our Ministers. They've actually made an effort to come here and look for themselves how devastating this drought is not just to our farmers, to our towns and everywhere we see the impacts of drought. We do need assistance and need the million dollar grant that we are receiving today. I do thank the Federal Government but, as a council, we will use that wisely. We will look at our capacity to be able to employ more people and also a lot of the mental health issues that are really resonating at the moment in our community for people who are really struggling. We are very, very proud farmers. I'm a fifth generation farmer. We're very, very proud farmers to be part of our agricultural land. And our community is struggling. It's a step. If it gets worse, we'll have to do another step but I'm sure our Federal colleagues are well aware of that. What they've done today is another step in supporting our communities, our regional communities. And I do thank very much our Federal Government, especially you, Prime Minister: a tremendous effort to come back from America and be here with us today in what is a critical situation. So, once again, thank you very much. We do look forward to working more with Federal Government and utilising this million dollars very well in our community. Thank you.

DAVID LITTLEPROUD: David, did you want to say anything?

DAVID GOODING: Yeah. I'd just like to say thank you very much for coming to our farm and releasing these packages because it does help the farmers that are in need. It does give them hope. And, um, that is a positive thing because, like Paul was just saying, is saying, the mental issue is very tough on farmers with maintaining a level of positiveness with the way the weather's been for so long. But I can assure you it will rain. We've just got to hang in there. People like Jack here that is raising this money, I can assure you the charities that he is raising this money for and it's going out to, it is going to the people that need it. And that is a great thing. So those - those little gifts, those little bits and pieces are a big help to those that are struggling. And it's not just farmers, it's our communities, um, which concerns us as well. We - my son was at a windscreen shop yesterday just getting a truck windscreen fixed and they said - he said, "Oh, you guys been going alright?" and they said "No, when it's dry, people don't go in and get a coffee and they don't break their windscreens. So, no, we're very quiet also." So it's a flow-on effect across all industries in our towns. We need our people in our towns to get through this as well. So thank you for these grants, and we all appreciate it very much, thank you.

DAVID LITTLEPROUD: We've got Brendan Taylor from AgForce, a State representative body for farmers. Brendan, do you want to say something about the package mate?

BRENDAN TAYLOR: Yeah, sure. Look, we commend the Federal Government for this announcement today. Funding for our regions in these dire times is always welcome. And, you know, just to echo the sentiments of the mayor and David that, you know, when farmers do it tough, the whole communities do it tough and it flows right through the communities. And we need keep our communities strong and viable for when it does start to rain again, so that we can get back to doing what we do best and that's producing food and fodder.

PRIME MINISTER: Any questions? We'll take some questions. Let's just stay on the announcement and then we're happy to go to other matters and we'll give Jack a leave pass on that one.

JOURNALIST: Prime minister --

JOURNALIST: You mentioned making it easier for families and farmers to access this. How much is it about the farmers encouraging them to stick their hand up and - and accept the help that's on offer?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, that's why making it easier, I think, is a big part of it. I mean, there are - there are many reasons why often people in rural communities and farmers won't reach out and sometimes, you know, they - they feel like they shouldn't and my message to them is you should. You work hard. This isn't - this isn't welfare. This is really just helping people make sure that they maintain a viability. I mean what we are doing here is important assets for our country, our farming assets, they're lands, they can remain productive; that they can stay on the land is really important to Australia. So it's an important investment, and so we would encourage them to reach out to those financial counsellors. That's why this package includes, as the previous ones had, support for those financial counsellors. Now, those counsellors, I think, have been angels in these communities. They've done a tremendous job just helping people make sense of a lot of these forms, but also their own financial planning and - and for many farming communities, some hard decisions some of them are having to make. And so we just want to help them by providing the right support network for them to make those - those often very difficult decisions. So, look, it's a mixture of both things. It can be a bit complicated, the process, so we'll ease that up. Some of the rules have been a bit tight. So, as Bridget said, particularly how you treat off-farm income, that's been an important thing to recognise and change, both on assets and income. Also, this - this program provides additional payments for those who are going through some reskilling as well. Some of the decisions they're making about maybe boosting their capability for off-farm income or even potentially career transitioning, and potentially moving off the land. And if that's the decision they're making then we want to have supports that help them make that decision.

BRIDGET MCKENZIE: One of the ridiculous things - can I just?

PRIME MINISTER: Sure, Bridget --

BRIDGET MCKENZIE: Is that 80% of farmers have partners, and right now, if you want to apply for Farm Household Allowance you and your partner have to fill in the paperwork separately. So a very simple quick change we can make, you know, ASAP, no legislation required, is actually to make sure one partnered couple make one application. So there's a lot we can do both within Centrelink offices now whilst we wait for legislation to get through.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, you've just returned from the United States -- a place where farming is subsidised. I know for a fact, I've been there myself this year, that farmers get a cheque for lost income from extreme weather conditions. Is that something the Australian Government would consider?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, look, we have a different means of income support here in Australia than they have in the United States and that's what we're talking about today. We have different systems and we have different trading arrangements with other countries, and our access to markets, whether they're in Japan or China or Korea or Indonesia, our access to those markets is incredibly important. I mean, the prices you get, and the markets you can sell them to, when you do get a bit of a break are massively important. And we're not going to do anything that would jeopardise access that our farmers have to these important markets. So we'll find other

ways to provide that support, and today we're talking about 100 million. And I said around 40%, just over that actually in this year alone, and if there needs to be more, there'll be more. I've made no secret about that and I think today's announcement is further demonstration about resolving that.

JOURNALIST: Would you consider --

JOURNALIST: I know the announcement has been welcomed by farmers but there's still some concerns about long-term drought planning. We still don't have a national drought policy. Is that something the government will look at?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, no, I don't agree we don't have a national drought policy. We do have a national drought policy. It was launched at the National Drought Summit last year. I went through the vast array of measures that form part of that, everything from looking after people's mental health to [inaudible] water infrastructure grants because there's 21 water projects currently committed to, almost a million dollars. So we have a very broad-ranging response in terms of the long-term national water grid which is being stood up next month and that's just being established now. I mean, that will complete the broader planning and the priorities for other major water infrastructure projects all across Australia. So this has been a \$7 billion now, plus an extra \$100 million today response that has been rolled out over the last 12 months. So I call that both strategic, comprehensive and very focused on both the short-term immediacy needs of farming families and the longer-term future for agriculture in this country.

JOURNALIST: You've just said if there needs to be more, there will be more.

PRIME MINISTER: Yeah.

JOURNALIST: Is there a timeline in which to make that decision in?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, there are - there's a budget update at the end of the year of which this will now be incorporated into. There's a budget next year, and there's a budget update after that, and there's a budget after that. So the government regularly makes these decisions and we do it on the basis of listening to what's happening with farming communities around the country. Remember this, what we've announced today, is a product of the review we initiated late last year into how the Farm Household Allowance was working. When we first were responding to this, that was a big issue and it wasn't something you could just flick a switch and it would fix overnight. It needed some careful listening and analysis and we've done that and now we're able to make these changes.

JOURNALIST: So councils that have missed out on that \$13 million, is there a chance they could be added to receive a million dollars?

PRIME MINISTER: We do it on the basis of the assessments we get about the future projections on weather, and what their current needs are, and we make those -- that's why we've added another 13 today and we started out with under a hundred in the first round - it was 75, I think --

BRIDGET MCKENZIE: Yeah.

PRIME MINISTER: -- when we first kicked it off. So it's gone from 75 to 123 since we initiated this program. So where it needs to be placed, it will be.

JOURNALIST: Will you be making all of those reports to [inaudible].

PRIME MINISTER: Well, they've all gone into Cabinet and the normal processes will apply as to what applies to Cabinet documents.

JOURNALIST: We can see them in 30 years?

PRIME MINISTER: It's the Cabinet.

JOURNALIST: Do you think 100 million package announced today is enough for 80,000 farmers around the country?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, it's not just 100 million today. It's seven billion that we've announced over the last year. So it's -

JOURNALIST: But you don't have a seven billion in the bank -

PRIME MINISTER: -- seven billion plus -

JOURNALIST: -- do you?

PRIME MINISTER: Sorry?

JOURNALIST: You don't have seven billion in the bank today for drought. That's building up over time?

PRIME MINISTER: That is building up over time but already, you know, we've had hundreds of millions already which has been provided through the Farm Household Allowance, through the Drought Communities Program. This is money that's already there. It's already in communities. This is another 100 million on top of that, and there's the 100 million drawdown that starts from 1st of July next year as well, which is going into water infrastructure. So this is a constant investment. Constant. And we're responding and we're listening,

carefully, to how this drought is playing out on the ground, and responding each time. So we listen and then we act. And we're going to keep doing that.

JOURNALIST: One on another topic if possible?

PRIME MINISTER: Sure. We can go off - yeah, off this in a second. Is it on this issue?

JOURNALIST: I've got something separate.

PRIME MINISTER: That's alright, yeah.

JOURNALIST: Separate also.

PRIME MINISTER: Okay.

JOURNALIST: I have one final question, if that's okay related to drought.

PRIME MINISTER: Yeah, sure.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, would you consider a drought levy on fresh fruit and vegetables, meat and dairy, given the current drought crisis and increased costs that farmers wouldn't normally face?

PRIME MINISTER: So you're saying a drought levy to go back to the farmers?

JOURNALIST: Yep. Exactly. When you go to the supermarket, you pay an extra few cents or dollars to go direct to the farmer?

PRIME MINISTER: As I said before, what we do is we channel our income support through the programs that I've announced. That's the - that's the efficient measure which we've chosen to do this. The agricultural sector has levies on a range of different things for various purposes and that's actually run by industry, as you'd know. But that is not a measure that the government is considering, because we're providing the financial support direct out of the budget. See, we'll be in a surplus budget this year. And it was a while ago actually when the terrible floods hit Queensland, Brisbane. The government had to put a levy on because their budget was in deficit and they couldn't afford to actually provide the support. Now we can afford to do this because we've done the hard work of getting the budget back into surplus. So we don't have to go and tax people to help our farmers. We can just help them and that's what we're doing here. And so we'll continue to do that. But it shows the wisdom of good budget management to get your budget in shape. It means you can respond and you can support people, whether it's from, you know, natural disasters such as floods and effects like that, or longer-term natural events like drought. On that, I'm going to thank particularly Jack. Good on you, mate. Well done, mate. And the other guys John, David, the Mayor and AgForce for being with us and we'll take another more general questions and we'll catch up with you in just a sec.

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From: s22
Sent: Friday, 27 September 2019 8:28 PM
To: Communications Policy; s22
Infrastructure
Subject: FW: Prime Minister - Transcript - Interview with Karl Stefanovic, 2GB - Friday 27 September 2019 [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

From: PMO - Media
Sent: Friday, 27 September 2019 8:27:51 PM (UTC+10:00) Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney
Subject: Prime Minister - Transcript - Interview with Karl Stefanovic, 2GB - Friday 27 September 2019 [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

UNOFFICIAL



The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister

TRANSCRIPT
INTERVIEW WITH KARL STEFANOVIC, 2GB
FRIDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2019

TOPICS: *Drought Assistance; Jack Berne – fiver for a farmer; Queensland Dam infrastructure; US visit; US and China relationships.*

EO&E...

KARL STEFANOVIC: But for now, I'm joined by the Prime Minister himself, Scott Morrison. Prime Minister, good afternoon to you. State-side to the country-side, you must be exhausted but our farmers are doing it pretty tough, aren't they?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, they are up here in Dalby and right across the country. But you're right, yeah, New York yesterday or what seemed like yesterday and Dalby today. But they are doing it tough and that's why we made the announcement today of further measures. And today was all about further income support type measures and relief. So we've put the Farm Household Allowance, we've made that simpler. We've relaxed some of the rules around that, and about \$56 million going into that. And then we have got the second part which is putting more money into our Drought Communities Program. So we put 13 more local government areas. So about a million for each of those councils, including where we were today. And the other one is 30 million we're putting into Vinnies and Salvos and because they're doing great work all around the country, and that just really fills up their tank to go out and keep doing what they're doing.

STEFANOVIC: You've been out and about. You've seen it all over the last couple of months. It just goes from bad to worse, doesn't it? Is this enough?

PRIME MINISTER: Yeah, well - well, it'll be more. And I mean so long as the drought goes on, you know, we'll keep responding. I said that, you know, a year ago. And when we had the drought summit and we kicked off a lot of big programs there and you know, we've put seven billion in since then and we'll keep responding as the situation demands. And, I mean, one thing that's great that is when you come out to these places, as you know, people are still - they're positive, they're optimistic, they're talking about they're one day closer to rain and they're not giving up. And I had young Jack Berne with me today and, as you know, and he's well known to your listeners.

STEFANOVIC: Yeah.

PRIME MINISTER: And what he's done with Fiver for a Farmer, it's not just the money, as they were saying to him up there today. It's just the fact that a great little kid like him cares and other people care that gives them a real boost.

STEFANOVIC: Yeah, Jack's on our show a little bit later today, he's going to be joining us live. But it is that sentiment that is helping in the bush. I guess, to a large extent though, a lot of these farmers feel like they're not being looked after. I noticed with interest too, today, Labor leader, Anthony Albanese and Joel Fitzgibbon both said it's all too little too late. What do you say about that?

PRIME MINISTER: Oh, look, I don't think people should politicise the drought.

STEFANOVIC: Yeah.

PRIME MINISTER: We're all doing everything we can to provide the support that we are. And, you know, we don't set-and-forget on these things. We just keep rolling out more, I mean everything from mental health, financial counsellors, even the work we've done in geoscience and the work with the Bureau of Meteorology, which is providing support for farmers. Your response has to be far and wide. But it also has to be about water infrastructure. I mean, we've currently got just under a billion dollars going to 21 dam and water projects right now. And there's another 50 on the board that we're trying to get up with the state governments, and there's three and a half billion dollars that we want to put into that water infrastructure. So you've got to plan long-term with those projects but you've also got to put food on the table and put money in people's pockets.

STEFANOVIC: I agree with you, and I think a lot of people out there are incredibly frustrated. They can't understand or comprehend why the state governments aren't playing ball. You're coming to the table. You're trying to get these drought relief projects, like the big infrastructure projects, like dams, up and they're not coming to the table. What is going on with them?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, it is frustrating. I mean, New South Wales has come to the table very recently and we welcome that. And I met with the Premier over the phone last week, with the Deputy Prime Minister and John Barilaro, the Deputy Premier. And so we'll have a fast track list of projects which they've committed to try and take through the planning and environmental --

STEFANOVIC: Queensland's a dog's breakfast, though.

PRIME MINISTER: Oh, look, I mean, now they're squibbing on the size of dam projects.

STEFANOVIC: Yeah.

PRIME MINISTER: I mean, they actually haven't formally told us this yet but, you know, they can pay public servants more but they can't live up to the dam promise. So that's frustrating. But, again, I don't want to politicise drought; I just want to get the support out there. We just want to get these dam projects underway

and they're done by state governments. I mean, the Commonwealth does its bit but fundamentally that's where it's done.

STEFANOVIC: These people are hurting, aren't they?

PRIME MINISTER: Yeah, they are. But, as I say, they're supporting each other. The mental health side of this is incredibly important. I spoke to a rural financial counsellor up here in Dalby today who has a lot of clients and she was just taking me through some of the issues that they're facing. One of the things we did today was we relaxed the rules on what's called off-farm income to access the Farm Household Allowance because people are getting - you know, supplementing their income by getting other jobs and doing things off the farm. And that can sometimes crib them getting access to this allowance. And so we've changed that rule, both on the assets they can own off-farm but as well as the income they can earn off-farm. And we just want to try and keep people who make the decisions that they want to tough this out, we want to keep them there because it is going to rain and then there's an opportunity on the other side, like there always is.

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PRIME MINISTER: It's been good to be here. Thanks.

STEFANOVIC: Thanks Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER: Cheers, Karl.

[END]

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s22

From: s22
Sent: Tuesday, 1 October 2019 7:00 PM
To: Wilson, Helen; Spencer, Nicole
Cc: Agriculture
Subject: NEWS ARTICLE Labor calls for audit of government's claimed \$7bn drought package | Australia news | The Guardian

s22

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/oct/01/labor-calls-for-audit-of-governments-claimed-7bn-drought-package>

Labor calls for audit of government's claimed \$7bn drought package

Joel Fitzgibbon says Coalition's drought funding has been 'ad hoc, confusing and lacking in direction'

[Sarah Martin](#) Last modified on Tue 1 Oct 2019 18.37 AEST

Labor has asked the auditor general to investigate the government's [claimed \\$7bn in drought assistance](#), saying the response has been "ad hoc, confusing and lacking in direction".

As the government defends the roll-out of its drought package, which saw one regional council receive \$1m in taxpayer support despite enjoying good rainfall, Labor's shadow agriculture minister, Joel Fitzgibbon, has written to the auditor general, Grant Hehir, requesting a full audit.

He said an inquiry into all drought funding initiatives since 2014 was needed to ensure they had been "both effective in assisting farmers and rural communities and are delivering value for taxpayers".

The request also asks Hehir to look at the criteria underpinning the [Drought](#) Communities Program which has excluded some local government areas "that were clearly more drought-affected than some that were included". This is in reference to the Moyne council in south-west Victoria which is expected to reject the \$1m grant.

"As large parts of Australia suffer the worst drought on record, the government's response has been ad hoc, confusing and lacking in direction," Fitzgibbon said on Tuesday.

“Farmers and rural communities are tiring of prime ministerial drought tours, empty talk about dams, exaggerated funding announcements and now, what appears to be political favouritism and pork barrelling.”

The government has been under pressure over its drought assistance measures since minister David Littleproud told parliament that the government would not release reports written by the special envoy on the drought, [Barnaby Joyce](#), nor a report prepared by the government’s drought coordinator, Major General Stephen Day.

Despite Littleproud saying no report existed in relation to Joyce’s work, the former Nationals leader has said he sent an “awful lot” of correspondence relating to his role, including 1,500-word text messages.

On Tuesday, Joyce hit back at critics of his role, including Fitzgibbon, accusing the shadow agriculture minister of neglecting to visit drought-affected communities.

“I think it is only fair enough that Mr Fitzgibbon answer – where is his trip to Dubbo? Where is his trip to Longreach? Where is his trip to Charters Towers?

“The only trips I can see all bar one are near the coast – these are the the seats that the [Labor party](#) were trying to win at the election.”

Fitzgibbon has questioned what value taxpayers received from the Joyce appointment, [which cost taxpayers \\$675,000 over a nine-month period, including Joyce’s normal activities as a backbencher](#), but excluding his salary and that of two extra staff assigned to the role.