



SENATOR BRIDGET MCKENZIE

THE NATIONALS *for Regional Australia*

JUNE 2019 NEWSLETTER

WE'RE DELIVERING

The re-election of the Liberal and Nationals Government is evidence the 30 per cent of Australians who live outside the capital cities back our commitment to the regions.

As Deputy Leader of the Nationals and now as Minister for Agriculture, I can say categorically The Nationals in Government have listened to the needs of regional Australia and we will continue to deliver significant improvements that will make a tangible benefit to our lives.

I am extremely proud of what we have managed to achieve.

It is both humbling and incredibly rewarding to serve the nation as Deputy Leader of The Nationals and Minister for Agriculture, knowing the decisions we are taking will make a real difference to the lives of regional Australians.

Look, for instance, at rural and regional connectivity.

The Nationals have taken up the challenge to ensure we enjoy telecommunication services comparable to our metropolitan cousins.

Without The Nationals, the Government's \$220 million Stronger Regional Connectivity Package would not exist.

The Stronger Regional Connectivity Package, announced in response to the 2018 Regional Telecommunications Review, takes The Nationals in Government's commitment in the Mobile Black Spot Program to \$380 million.

Including co-investment from State and Local Governments, mobile network operators, businesses and community organisations, funding across the four rounds of the program so far is more than \$760 million.

The roll out already includes more than 700 new base stations and hundreds more to come.

Did you know:

Thanks to The Nationals in Government more than 18,400 Triple 0 calls have been connected using Mobile Black Spot Program towers.

The message is clear: The Nationals in Government are rolling out the most comprehensive program to connect rural and regional Australia.

Regional Australia rejected the alternative government because it has a proven track record of not delivering on regional communication and does not have a plan, a policy, or a clue about delivering for the regions.

The fact we have been able to achieve so much only serves to drive us on, to continue providing for the regions.

In my role I have the opportunity to meet so many unique and inspiring Australians who are selflessly helping their community, working hard to provide for their family and preparing for the future.

The Nationals know strong and growing regions means a strong Australia.



The Federal election result was a resounding endorsement of The Nationals and regional Australia. On election day voters returned all Nationals seats because right across Australia only The Nats have a strong, positive plan for prosperous communities and regions.

There was a genuine fear our agricultural industries faced decimation under a Bill Shorten government and it is clear rural and regional Australians know the value of having MPs and Senators that stand up and fight for them in Canberra.

Whether it was jailing agri-terrorists, record funding for drought, regional communications and health outcomes and our \$100 billion worth of infrastructure right across the board, everything that regional Australia needs to go forward and develop was part of The Nationals' platform.

We have a strong plan for practical and pragmatic measures to assist not just our farming communities but also small and larger businesses adapt and adopt new technologies to reduce their emissions.

We held all our seats thanks to hard work, outstanding candidates and members, and dedicated volunteers spreading our good news across the electorates.

In Victoria, both Damian Drum (Nicholls) and Darren Chester (Gippsland) were easily returned and it is great to welcome Anne Webster to The Nationals' Federal party room. Anne is a passionate advocate for the vulnerable in her community and her determination and drive will make her an outstanding Member for Mallee.

The Nationals are hard-working locals who are connected to their communities and are fighting about the issues their communities care about, which is how it is supposed to be.

As Nationals Senator for Victoria, Deputy Leader and Minister for Agriculture I'm looking forward to working with our regional communities to see Victoria and regional Australia prosper.

Senator Bridget McKenzie
Deputy Leader of The Nationals



DROUGHT

To tackle the drought, our government has established a \$5 billion Future Drought Fund that guarantees support against future droughts faced by farmers and communities in rural and regional Australia.

This money will support farmers and their local communities when it's not raining.

We have also boosted 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.

This boosts our total commitment to this program to \$81.1 million, helping communities stimulate their local economies, through new or upgraded community infrastructure, road upgrades, and water infrastructure projects.

We will also help to take some of the pressure off farmers and their families by helping them to keep food on the table, pay their bills and meet their basic needs.

Our government will give \$30 million to key charities to provide support to at least 10,000 households facing hardship.

This will help individuals and families to get by while returning the money to local communities.



PHOTO: Visiting with Darren Chester in Gippsland

My first priority as Minister for Agriculture has been to get out across the country and meet with all sectors the Agriculture portfolio covers, to understand the issues from the ground up.

I'm pleased to say the nation-wide program kicked off right here in my home state, thanks to the invite from the Member for Gippsland, Darren Chester.

I was able to meet with fishing representatives at Bullock Island; vegetable growers at Lindenow Valley; visit Heyfield Timber and participate in an agriculture roundtable discussion organised by Darren.

Gippsland is one of the most diverse regions in Australia.

It features some of the most productive agricultural land in the nation, with a prosperous dairy industry, lamb and wool production, beef cattle, horticulture in its various forms, a large commercial fishing industry and timber harvesting from plantations and sustainably managed native forests.

NEW ERA

The Nationals enter this Federal Parliament with a new look and a strong endorsement from rural and regional Australia.

There was a lot of talk before the election about rural women from the left, and independents, mounting their push. The reality is The Nationals are putting strong regional women into office.

I am delighted to welcome Sam McMahon and Susan McDonald to the Nats' Senate ranks. Susan, from Queensland, takes Barry O'Sullivan's place and Sam replaces retired NT Senator Nigel Scullion.

And at the time of writing Perin Davey, The Nationals' Lead Senate Candidate for NSW, was poised to replace John "Wacka" Williams.

With Michelle Landry retaining her Queensland seat of Capricornia, and Anne Webster winning Mallee, the Nats party room features six women.

I would also like to acknowledge our parliamentary leader Michael McCormack. As I have already said, Michael is doing a fabulous job. He's travelled 60,000 kilometres and visited dozens of electorates, getting out on the ground and connecting with communities.

This was traditional grass roots campaigning.

Regional people care about who's going to deliver and support prosperous communities and Michael has been fundamental in delivering that message.



RURAL HEALTH

The Liberal and Nationals Government will invest \$550 million in the Stronger Rural Health Strategy.

This groundbreaking Strategy will deliver 3000 additional doctors, more than 3000 additional nurses in rural general practice and hundreds of additional allied health professionals in the regions over 10 years.

It includes the establishment of the Murray-Darling Medical Schools Network to provide the opportunity for students from the Murray-Darling region to stay in the region while undertaking their medical training.

This measure will address rural doctor shortages, improve the future distribution of the medical workforce and build on the Government's existing investment in rural undergraduate training.

HONOUR TO BE APPOINTED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

It is an incredible honour and one of the proudest achievements in my life to be appointed the Federal Minister for Agriculture.

Having grown up in regional Victoria, I have seen and experienced many of the substantial challenges and tests that rural and regional Australians have faced.

Australia's agriculture industry is one of the most important sectors to not just our economy, but also to our regional communities. It is worth \$60 billion to our GDP and employs more than 300,000 Australians, the majority in small business.

Successful regional communities mean a successful Australian economy and a better standard of living for all.

The future of our fishery, forestry, food and fibre sectors are critical to ensuring we

remain a competitive export nation along with providing the essential food and other produce for our nation.

We have seen in the past 18 months, the terrible toll that the drought and other natural disasters have had on our agricultural sector and I want to acknowledge the Prime Minister for acting so quickly to help regional Australians tackle these adversities.

I look forward to helping the agriculture sector grow to become a \$100 billion industry and employing many more thousands of Australians.

Successful regional communities mean a successful Australian economy and a better standard of living for all.

Get in touch

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