

# OUR PLAN

## FOR A STRONGER AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY SECTOR



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## KEY POINTS

The Liberal and Nationals Government has a plan to lift Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to a \$100 billion industry by 2030. The industry has a roadmap to do this – our policies will help get them there.

A \$100 billion industry means many more jobs in our regional and rural communities.

Our plan to help the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector reach its potential is focused on:

- Tackling barriers to growth and production.
- Providing the water needed for growth and drought proofing.
- Tackling intergenerational land transfer and encouraging new farmers.
- Expanding exports and improving market access.
- Getting the balance right for the fisheries and forestry industries.

There are challenges, but we're addressing these too: pests and weeds, external biosecurity threats, climate impacts, changeable consumer preferences and international competition on research and development and commercialisation.

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will:

- **Support farmers to buy their first farm** and plan for intergenerational transfer with 'AgriStarter' concessional loans through the Regional Investment Corporation.
- **Establish the National Water Grid**, a statutory authority responsible for national strategic planning and management of water policy and infrastructure.
- Increase opportunities to sell Australian food and fibre overseas including expanding horticulture through a new **2030 protected horticulture strategy**.
- Continue to ensure the industry has the skilled workforce in needs through a National Agricultural Workforce Strategy and a new **National Agricultural Labour Advisory Committee**.
- Support farm safety with a new **National Farm Safety Education Fund**.
- Implement a Dairy Mandatory Code of Conduct and support more sophisticated **contracting and milk marketing tools** to increase price transparency.
- Support the battle against **pests and weeds** in drought affected communities.
- **Deliver the Murray-Darling Basin Plan** in full to give Basin Communities certainty – a triple bottom line approach that recognises the continued importance of agriculture in the Basin.
- **Deliver increased transparency and accountability** in river management.
- **Commission the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission** to undertake a review of southern Basin water markets.
- **Protect the right to farm with new laws targeting trespass and protecting farmers' privacy.**



- **Develop a National Fishing Plan** built on close consultation with the sector to achieve a shared vision for the industry.
- **Develop a Commonwealth Fisheries Resource Sharing Framework** based on comprehensive surveys and careful analysis.
- **Support better mental health for commercial fishers** through a trial of a mental health trusted advocate network.
- Support projects that **improve the health of Australia's marine and estuarine habitats.**
- Invest in **building the capacity** of recreational, Indigenous and commercial fisheries representatives.
- **Support new and upgraded recreational fishing and camping facilities**, regional jobs and fishing safety through a new grant program for local councils.
- Support the planting of 1 billion new plantation trees by developing special **Plantation Development Concessional Loans** under the Regional Investment Corporation.
- Deliver **20-year rolling Regional Forestry Agreements** with relevant states.
- Bring forward the establishment of the **Regional Forestry Hub in South West Slopes NSW** as a pilot Hub.
- Develop a **farm forestry strategy.**
- Commission an **inquiry into short-term timber supply chain constraints** in the national plantation sector through the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Water Resources.

### **Labor risks it all.**

Under Labor, farm production will be hit. They have already promised to burden farmers with unnecessary and unprecedented new federal environmental regulations and raise the cost of doing business with additional taxes.

Labor's trade policy will make it next to impossible to grow our exports. They want to meddle with the Free Trade Agreements our government has delivered. Labor's trade policy will take us backwards.

Under Labor, there will be no growth in the forestry industry.

Not only do they plan to return to their failed Tasmanian Forestry Agreement, there are real concerns that Labor will abolish Regional Forest Agreements altogether and put forestry under the control of their proposed new Environment Protection Agency in Canberra.

Under Labor, Murray-Darling Basin communities will not have certainty.

## **OUR PLAN**

### **Tackling barriers to growth and production**

#### ***Increasing production by combating pests and weeds***

Pests and weeds cost Australian farmers and graziers billions of dollars in production losses every year.



The Liberal and Nationals Government has recognised that tackling the scourge of pests and weeds does not stop during times of drought. Hardy weeds can dominate pastures and wild dogs can accentuate stock losses.

We have invested \$15 million in the Communities Combating Pests and Weed Impacts During Drought Program to deliver 48 on-ground, direct action projects in Queensland, NSW, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia.

With the drought continuing, a re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will provide an additional \$10 million for a further round of funding under the program. This will enable farmers and local communities to continue to fight feral pests and invasive weeds and boost agricultural productivity and growth

***Labour challenges are impacting growth***

The agricultural sector is facing a number of labour force challenges that are impacting growth and the social fabric of rural and regional communities.

Too many of our best and brightest kids leave our rural communities, never returning to practise their skills and professional interests. Agricultural and STEM graduates are scarce and increasingly mobile, meaning hiring and retaining young talent is difficult.

Regionally based SMEs and large-scale, labour intensive enterprises are finding it increasingly difficult to source high-performing seasonal labour.

The Liberal and Nationals Government has already introduced a suite of measures to help farmers access the workers they need. We introduced targeted changes to the Seasonal Worker Program, the Pacific Labour Scheme and the Working Holiday Maker visa programs.

To further ensure a sustainable, highly-skilled workforce, in the 2019-20 Budget the Liberal and Nationals Government committed \$1.9 million to work with the industry to develop a National Agricultural Workforce Strategy.

The strategy will consider the role of agricultural education in meeting Australia's current and future workforce needs and identify labour gaps across the agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture sectors as well as ways to attract, train and protect the workforce that is needed now and in the future.

To support this work, a re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will establish a National Agricultural Labour Advisory Committee. The Committee will consider and advise the Government on farm labour and agricultural sector workforce challenges.

On the other hand, Labor will put access to workers at risk with prohibitive penalty rates and union domination of industry needs.

Labor will increase the difficulty, complexity and cost of developing appropriate visa types, robbing employers and employees of opportunity.



### *A fairer go for dairy farmers*

The Liberal Nationals Government has stood behind our farmers – ensuring they get a fair price for their produce. In line with the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper, we invested \$11.4 million to boost Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) engagement with the agriculture sector – including the establishment of a new Commissioner dedicated to agriculture.

Dairy is Australia's third-largest agricultural industry with a value of \$4.3 billion in 2017-18 and is the economic mainstay of many rural communities. Yet dairy farmers around the country have been struggling.

In 2017, the Liberal Nationals Government asked the ACCC to examine the performance and structural problems within the dairy sector. The Commission found significant power imbalances at each point along the supply chain, with dairy farmers the worst hit. Farm gate prices for milk are eroding incentives for production and re-investment in an important domestic and export industry.

The ACCC recommended the establishment of a mandatory code of conduct, which, after extensive consultation with farmers and processors, the Liberal and Nationals Government will activate from 2020 – the 2019-20 Budget provided \$8.7 million for implementation. Drafting of regulations to give effect to the code has begun.

Current milk marketing follows a century-old model burdened with hidden pricing, constraints over growers' sales in favour of local processors and no hedging or options tools.

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will, through Australian Dairy Farmers, engage the Australian Milk Price Initiative (AMPI) to design new milk pricing and marketing concepts for the dairy sector. This will give dairy farmers better leverage, more transparency from the supply chain and more choices on how and when they price their milk.

### *National Farm Safety Education Fund*

One in five workplace fatalities happen on the farm. From January to September 2018, there were 49 reports of on-farm deaths with tractors, utilities, quads and motorbikes most often implicated. The same period saw 120 non-fatal on-farm injury events, 16 of them involving children under 15. Quad bikes and motorbikes accounted for around a third of all incidents.

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will seek to turn these statistics around. A \$3.5 million National Farm Safety Education Fund will be established to support activities that address on-farm safety issues including:

- Increasing peer-to-peer activities that promote farm safety measures.
- Developing and/or updating resources to support on-farm learning and awareness of farm safety.
- Campaigns specifically targeted for and to children including farm dam, farm machinery and quad bike safety.



- Support for the annual Farm Safety Week.

Farmsafe Australia (which is supported by farm organisation members) is expected to be a major beneficiary of the Fund. Farmsafe's mission is to drive efforts to enhance the well-being and productivity of Australian agriculture through improved health and safety awareness and practices.

### **Providing the water needed for growth and drought proofing**

#### ***National Water Grid***

We need the states to work more closely with the Australian Government to better capture and store water – as well as protect our communities from devastating flood.

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will establish the National Water Grid – a statutory authority responsible for the strategic planning and project management of water policy and water infrastructure across the nation.

The National Water Grid will:

- Bring together the world's best scientists to remove the politics from the allocation, capture and storage of water – ensuring decisions are based on the best available science.
- Develop a pipeline of all established and future water infrastructure projects and then identify the missing links.
- Use the best science to examine how large-scale water diversion projects could be established to deliver reliable and cost-effective water to farmers and regional communities.

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will also:

- Seek agreement from states and territories to co-invest in the project through COAG.
- Invest an initial \$100 million to better understand water resources and kick-start investigation and delivery of water diversion projects.
- Amend the Operating Mandate for the Regional Investment Corporation to allow local Governments and the private sector to access water infrastructure loan funding.

#### ***Deliver the Murray-Darling Basin Plan for a healthy river system***

The Liberal and Nationals Government is committed to a Basin Plan that delivers certainty to farmers, communities and the environment. The drought and historic low inflows in Murray Darling Basin rivers over the past twelve months have placed stress on the river and the communities that rely on it.

Communities should expect transparency in river management, water markets and Basin Plan delivery.



A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will:

- Request the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to undertake a review of the southern Basin water market and its operation since 2012.

Unlike Labor, we are committed to the social and economic criteria that will govern how the additional 450 GL in water for the environment will be recovered – and the 1500 GL cap on buybacks.

***Tackling intergenerational land transfer and encouraging new farmers***

Our Government believes in a fair go for farming families.

To realise a \$100 billion industry by 2030 we must nurture and foster our next generation of farmers, graziers and agricultural producers.

We know there are many young people crying out to own their own farm but with little to no means to do so.

Most Australians appreciate the challenge faced by young Australians wishing to buy their first home but it is even harder for new and young farmers seeking their first farm.

A productive farming operation that provides a steady income can be priced at millions of dollars. For young farmers, the level of equity and deposit required is daunting. Basic stock and equipment is a further cost.

It can become even more complicated when intergenerational transfer is involved, which is increasingly the case with an ageing farmer population.

In Europe, the UK and Canada, governments have acknowledged the problem and found innovative ways to deal with it.

It's time we did the same.

The Liberal and Nationals Government has extended the mandate of the Regional Investment Corporation (RIC) to create a new loan product to assist new entrants.

'AgriStarter' concessional loans of up to \$2 million to new farmers will help them purchase a majority share or total share of a farm.

Many of Australia's older farmers would like to transfer their farm but haven't got the capacity to simply gift it to the next generation, or someone else. The loan means families will be able to discuss succession, plan for the future and new entrants to farming will get the start they need.

***Expanding exports and improving market access***

Improving and growing export markets is critical for the sector to reach a \$100 billion value by 2030.

- Australian farmers produce almost 93 percent of our daily domestic food supply.
- Each farmer produces enough food to feed 600 people, 150 at home and 450 overseas.



- About 70 per cent of what we produce is exported.

Through our trade agenda and the delivery of trade agreements, tariffs are coming down, making our agricultural exports more competitive.

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will prioritise the conclusion of a free trade agreement with the European Union, the implementation of the India Economic Strategy and the expansion of the Trans Pacific Partnership.

Other market-opening opportunities include a free trade deal with the United Kingdom and a trade agreement with the four-nation Pacific Alliance.

The 2019-20 Budget provided an additional \$60 million for Export Market Development Grants to allow small and medium businesses to capitalise on international opportunities. It provided an additional \$29.4 million investment to back Australia's agricultural export trade.

By contrast, Labor has a poor record delivering trade and market access for our agricultural produce.

Labor will be driven by the unions to reduce trade in betrayal of the sector, workers and jobs.

The alarm bells have already sounded, with the unions – which run the Labor Party – pressuring Bill Shorten to rip up our latest agreement with Indonesia.

#### ***\$11.4 million to accelerate horticulture market access***

Horticulture will strongly contribute to the \$100 billion target. Horticulture exports have doubled in value since 2010-11 and are projected to be valued at \$3 billion in 2018-19.

The Gross Value of Production (GVP) of horticulture is estimated at almost \$10.7 billion, with around 73,000 employees across the sector in 2017-18. By 2022-23 the GVP is forecast to be \$13.6 billion.

The Liberal and Nationals Government is investing a further \$11.4 million over four years to work on the next tranche of horticulture market priorities.

Market access was recently achieved for walnuts to India and the nut sector has identified significant opportunities in Latin America. Our investment has also brought phytosanitary pathways to market.

There are now opportunities to diversify markets in Asia, India, the Middle East and Latin America. Maintaining and improving existing market access is critical. For example, the transition of Vietnam to a regulated market in 2015 required the development of more than 30 technical submissions for a range of commodities.

#### ***\$5.1 million to tackle non-tariff measures***

Trade agreements are progressively reducing import tariffs and as a result, global agricultural trade has grown.



However, the use of non-tariff measures (NTMs) has also grown and this is impacting on our exports: 245 NTMs cost the red meat industry \$3.4 billion a year across 41 markets.

Most NTMs (such as health and safety certification or biosecurity compliance) are justified as they provide assurances, but inefficient and overly-costly requirements can have a profound effect.

The Liberal and Nationals Government is investing \$5.1 million over four years and \$2.4 million each subsequent year on a program to help Australian export industries tackle NTMs. The work will assess the nature and impact of NTMs and develop strategies and commercial approaches for their reduction or removal

***\$6.8 million to expand the Agricultural Trade and Market Access Cooperation program***

The Agricultural Trade and Market Access Cooperation (ATMAC) program has delivered real market access gains for Australian farmers and exporters. For example, technical collaboration between the Australian Livestock Export Council and China on Bluetongue virus will provide positive outcomes for both countries in the trade of Australian live ruminants and generic material.

The Liberal and Nationals Government is investing \$6.8 million in the ATMAC program for a further four years – to keep our export markets moving.

***\$6.1 million to extend the Package Assisting Small Exporters program***

In 2013, the Liberal Nationals Government established the Package Assisting Small Exporters (PASE), a grant program to improve market access for small exporters. A \$6.1 million investment will extend the program for four years.

With small businesses often finding it difficult to navigate exporting, PASE has funded 54 projects across a number of industries. For example, the Primal Foods Group created an online portal – Farmgate Exchange – as a single point of contact for grain trade between smaller Australian growers and international buyers. The portal will help growers to market grain from their own silos directly to buyers around the world, delivering better access and prices.

The Liberal and Nationals Government will also continue to work with the United States to ensure Australian fishers are meeting the new requirements for importers under the US Marine Mammal Protection Act and are not locked out of the market.

***2030 Protected Horticulture Strategy***

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government, along with industry and Horticulture Innovation Australia, will progress a 2030 vision for protected horticulture in Australia. Protected cropping (whether high-tech enclosed systems or poly tunnel) is a leading tool to increase food production: reducing risks from temperature extremes, pests and bugs and water availability.

The Liberal Nationals Government has invested \$4.3 million in the National Vegetable Protected Cropping Centre, a state-of-the-art greenhouse facility for research, education and training. We will build on this and provide national leadership to develop a 2030 Protected Horticulture



Strategy. The Strategy will ensure the sustainable expansion of protected cropping in Australia and coordination of industry, governments and other research and development organisations.

### ***Fisheries international engagement***

Australia participates in a number of internationally-shared fisheries with migratory stocks like tuna and straddling stocks such as orange roughy.

The Liberal and Nationals Government has focused on the sustainability of fisheries we share with other nations, and ensuring ongoing access for our industry. We actively support Australia's critical work in Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and other similar international forums.

The Liberal and Nationals Government is committed to building the capacity of our close neighbours to effectively manage their fisheries and ensure compliance with fisheries management rules. Capacity building helps ensure these countries protect the sustainability of shared stocks by adequately controlling their catch and combatting Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Our international collaboration efforts have led to significant reductions in IUU fishing, particularly in the southern ocean with Patagonian toothfish.

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government is committed to ongoing funding for our government agencies at the forefront of international fishing forums.

### **Getting the balance right for the fisheries and forestry industries**

#### ***The right planning***

Working with commercial, recreational, Indigenous and aquaculture fisheries, the Liberal and Nationals Government will develop a new sector blueprint.

We will leverage the strong cross-sectoral nature of the first National Fisheries Advisory Council, established in 2018, to develop Australia's first National Fisheries Plan.

Different jurisdictional approaches to fisheries policy and management are impacting the industry. The plan will develop a strategy for achieving the shared visions of the sector, seeking to harmonise:

- Resource sharing methodology.
- The way Indigenous interests are captured in legislation.
- Harvest strategy methodology.
- Aquaculture management.

#### ***Commonwealth Fisheries Resource Sharing Framework***

All fisheries sectors are concerned about ongoing access to resources.

Only the Liberal and Nationals Government is committed to ensuring fair and equitable sharing of fisheries.



In partnership with the sector we will develop a *Commonwealth Fisheries Resource Sharing Framework*. The Framework will outline the rules for sharing resources across the fisheries sectors and between the Commonwealth and other Australian jurisdictions.

To share a resource, you must first know how large it is, how much can be sustainably harvested and the current level of extraction. For that reason we have invested heavily in stock assessments and catch recording.

Once we have a complete picture, we will move forward with refined stock assessments and formal resource sharing arrangements.

The Liberal and Nationals Government has also launched a national recreational fishing survey to gather economic and social data: we are working with the states and the Northern Territory to align recreational catch surveys wherever possible. This data will again inform sustainability and resource sharing assessments.

We will continue the Southern Bluefin Tuna recreational catch survey as a basis for ongoing discussions about sustainable harvesting and resource sharing for this iconic species.

#### ***Removing red tape for the fisheries sector***

The Liberal and Nationals Government has a track record of simplifying cross-jurisdictional fisheries management to increase efficiency.

Most Australian fisheries are managed by the states, the Northern Territory or the Commonwealth – depending on location. In some cases, management is shared under Offshore Constitutional Settlement (OCS) arrangements.

Our Government has worked hard with the states and the Northern Territory to minimise the regulatory burden under some OCS arrangements, negotiating responsibility back to single jurisdictions where appropriate. For example, we successfully transitioned the Western Australian Southern Demersal Gillnet and Longline Fishery to single jurisdiction management in 2018.

The Liberal and Nationals Government is committed to continuing to implement simpler fisheries management. We will work with Queensland and the Northern Territory to move a number of fisheries away from joint management to single jurisdiction.

#### ***Fisheries habitat restoration***

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will work with fishing clubs to restore marine and estuarine habitats through an \$8 million investment.

The health of many fisheries and fish stocks depends on the health and proper functioning of our estuaries, which provide critical nursery habitats.

This funding will build on the work being undertaken by OceanWatch. OceanWatch is working in partnership with the Australian seafood industry, federal and state governments, natural resource managers, private enterprise and local communities on habitat restoration.



### ***Capacity building for fisheries representatives***

The Liberal and Nationals Government is ensuring that all relevant fisheries sectors are included in decision-making through an extension of objectives in the Fisheries Administration Act 1999.

Changes to the Act mean the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) must now ensure the interests of recreational and Indigenous fishers (along with commercial fishers) are considered in fisheries management decisions.

The Liberal and Nationals Government also established the National Fishing Advisory Council (NFAC) to ensure each sector is heard in the development and refinement of Commonwealth fisheries policies.

As well, the industry has highlighted the need to ensure representatives are appropriately skilled and knowledgeable.

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will invest \$400,000 in building the representative capacity of the sector by delivering a well-developed understanding of the regulatory, scientific and economic drivers of fisheries management. The funding will target training for commercial, recreational and Indigenous representatives on relevant Commonwealth and national fisheries advisory bodies and committees.

### ***Mental health support for commercial fishers***

The Liberal and Nationals Government acknowledges recent work of the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation that highlighted the levels of psychological distress among fishers. Studies have shown a range of factors including chronic job insecurity has led to poor levels of mental health and high rates of suicide among Australian commercial fishers.

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will invest \$600,000 over two years to support a trial of a mental health trusted advocate program for the fisheries sector. Up to 10 advocates will be established in eight communities across the country. Advocates will be supported with training in mental health first aid or counselling to assist them in their role.

This will provide soft entry points to mental health services to reduce barriers and stigma. They will be the linkage between fishers and the wider mental health support network.

Funding is through an extension of the National Suicide Prevention Leadership and Support Program.

### ***Recreational fishing and camping facilities***

Around one in five Australians are recreational fishers, enjoying a healthy outdoor leisure activity.

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will invest \$20 million for local councils to improve, maintain or build new boating, marine rescue, fishing and camping facilities.



Through the new Fishing and Camping Program, Australians and overseas tourists will get better and more amenities to explore our vast coastline.

Studies have found a significant economic benefit from recreational fishing for Australia's fishing towns – coastal, lake and river. New and improved facilities will encourage tourism, bringing jobs and economic growth.

Fixing old and damaged facilities will also increase safety for our recreational fishers.

Councils will be able to apply for funding for a range of projects including for new or improved boat ramps, marine rescue facilities, toilet blocks and fish cleaning and camping facilities

### ***Plantation Development Concessional Loans***

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will support the delivery of 1 billion new plantation trees through a new concessional loan product under the Regional Investment Corporation (RIC).

The support is expected to encourage foreign and domestic investment in this slow-growing, long-term and sustainable crop at a time when demand is increasing and the domestic resource is stagnating.

Without Government support for the purchase of the land (the largest cost), there will continue to be little increase in Australia's total plantation estate.

It's anticipated that a \$500 million new capital investment could result in up to 150,000 hectares of new plantations – vital to meeting future demand for forest products.

Loans will be prioritised for new plantation development that delivers a sustainable resource and over time will support the growth of regional economies and communities.

### ***Implementing the \$20 million National Forest Industries Plan***

Our Government's new \$20 million National Forest Industries Plan is set to turbocharge Australia's renewable timber and wood fibre industry.

It's crucial to the industry's aspirational goal of tripling economic value by 2050.

The Liberal and Nationals Government will deliver the plan in full.

We will work with industry, governments and communities to deliver pilot Regional Forestry Hubs.

The Hubs will add value to existing and new forest resources. They will seek new processing opportunities and analyse inefficiencies, limitations or constraints to growth within the forest industries in each region.

The Hubs underway are in South West Western Australia, North/North West Tasmania, North East NSW and the Green Triangle region. A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will bring forward the establishment of the South West Slopes of NSW Hub as one of the pilots.



After the pilots, we will install Hubs in four more regions: Gippsland in Victoria, Central West NSW, South East Queensland and North Queensland.

We will continue discussions with other regions identified by industry as locations for further Hubs.

These areas have been selected because of their competitive advantages in forestry – including transport and processing infrastructure as well as a skilled forestry workforce.

Importantly, we recognise the opportunity provided to interested Indigenous landholders from unlocking potential timber supply through sustainable harvesting. We will work with them to deliver a new stream of returns to Indigenous communities.

Farm forestry has the potential to provide additional revenue from timber and carbon storage. Other benefits include bundling forestry and landscape services, supporting animal husbandry and lowering erosion and water evaporation.

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will work with industry and farming groups to develop a Farm Forestry Strategy. The aim is to transform farm forestry as a commercial, timber-supplying enterprise by investigating aggregation tools, data needs, mapping and business models and navigating the challenges of changing land use.

### ***Regional Forestry Agreements***

The Liberal and Nationals Government is backing in our native forestry sector.

The forest products industry (native and plantation) is vital to our regional communities.

Regional Forestry Agreements (RFAs) are the best mechanism for balancing environmental, economic and social demands on our native forests and giving the industry confidence for the future. Without the RFAs, the native timber industry would effectively shut down with widespread job losses.

Australia's native forests are sustainably managed – only 0.06 per cent are harvested annually and then regenerated. Nationally, more than 4 million hectares of forests have been protected since the RFAs were signed.

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will continue delivering 20-year extensions to RFAs until all are completed.

To bring further confidence to these Agreements, the Liberal and Nationals Government will publicly report on the management of native forests in the RFA regions every five years.

### ***Maintaining strong laws against illegal logging***

On 16 January 2019, the report of the 'Statutory review of the Illegal Logging Prohibition Act 2012' was tabled in Parliament.

The review examined the first five years of Australia's illegal logging laws.



A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will continue its strong stance against illegal logging.

The Forest Industry Advisory Council (FIAC) will consider the findings of the review and will provide advice on any strengthening of the laws while not increasing regulatory burden. Our Government will act on this advice.

***Inquiry into short-term timber supply chain constraints***

The Liberal and Nationals Government supports the industry, but with the long growing time for trees we need to assess any resource access or supply chain constraints in the short term.

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will ask the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Water Resources to conduct an inquiry into short-term timber supply chain constraints in the national plantation sector.

The Liberal and Nationals Government has a strong track record of delivering for agriculture.

Since we came to office the value of total production is up 25 per cent and the value of agricultural exports is up 29 per cent.

We have given farmers the tools to capitalise when times are good – and the help they need when times are tough.

**Support through tough times**

We have supported our farmers through the toughest of times – drought, floods and market downturns.

Dealing with the drought and preparing for future droughts has been a top priority, with \$6.3 billion of support to farmers and rural communities outlined in our *Plan for Supporting Farmers in Drought*.

The tragedy of the floods in northern Queensland in early 2019 reminded us that Australian farmers are at the mercy of weather. Hundreds of thousands of livestock were destroyed.

The Liberal and Nationals Government acted swiftly by developing a \$3.3 billion package to support the rebuilding of agriculture in the flood-hit zones. A new executive agency, the North Queensland Livestock Industry Recovery Agency, was established to deliver the package that includes:

- \$300 million for two grants programs to support restocking/replanting and to rebuild on-farm infrastructure.
- \$1.75 billion in loans to banks to support interest rate relief for existing and new business loans.
- \$1 billion of concessional loans through the Regional Investment Corporation for restocking and for debt refinancing.



These measures have helped in the immediate response. But rebuilding will take months and years and our Government's support will be there for the long haul. The North Queensland Livestock Industry Recovery Agency's long-term plan expected in the coming months will set this out.

### **Protecting farmers from extreme activists**

The Liberal and Nationals Government is about choice – farmers' choice to grow and process animals, fish, fruit and vegetables and choice for consumers. We have taken action to protect Australian farmers' right to farm animals without fear or intimidation.

Our Government has brought the Aussie Farms website under the Privacy Act, exposing it to potential penalties of more than \$400,000 for breaches. This action means that Aussie Farms is prescribed as an organisation under the Act.

We will legislate to make it an offence to use a carriage service, such as the internet, to disclose personal information to incite trespass on agricultural land where that could cause commercial detriment.

We will pass new laws to ensure that what Aussie Farms is doing is illegal and punishable by up to 12 months jail.

Exemptions will apply for bona-fide journalists and whistle-blowers, where the release of information shows a law being broken such as animal cruelty.

### ***Taking farms to kids and kids to farms***

A 2011 study by Primary Industry Education Foundation Australia found that 75 per cent of primary and secondary school students think that cotton socks are made from animal products. Forty-five per cent don't think that bread, bananas and cheese come from farmed product and 40 per cent believe that farming damages the environment.

The Liberal and Nationals Government is committed to changing attitudes to farming and addressing the gap in kids' understanding of food and fibre sources. We have committed \$10 million for two new programs – taking kids to farms and other primary production worksites, and establishing mini-farms in up to 80 city-based schools.

Further details are outlined in the Liberal and Nationals Government's *Plan to Showcase Agriculture: Our Heritage. Our Future.*

### ***Showcasing agriculture***

Agricultural shows are an integral part of Australian culture. They play an important role in country life, highlighting the local strengths and bringing communities together. This is particularly important when our regional communities are tested with extended droughts and other extreme weather events.

The Liberal and Nationals Government will establish a \$20 million Regional Agricultural Show Development Grants Program. Grants will be available for regional agricultural show societies



that run annual shows to upgrade and maintain existing infrastructure and build new facilities.

Further details are outlined in the Liberal and Nationals Government's *Plan to Showcase Agriculture: Our Heritage. Our Future.*

### **Opening markets**

To grow the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector we need access to more markets – and better access to existing markets.

Our track record speaks for itself.

Agriculture, fisheries and forestry contributed more than \$53 billion in export earnings in 2017–18, up by over \$14 billion from 2011/12 when Labor was in office.

In just six years the Liberal Nationals Government has concluded export agreements with China, Japan, Korea, the 10 economies of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the countries of the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations, as well as Indonesia, Peru and Hong Kong.

Our Free Trade Agreements have delivered.

Australia's agricultural exports to Korea are growing: for example, orange exports were worth \$4.6 million in 2017–18, a 59 per cent increase from \$2.9 million in 2016–17. There have been six rounds of tariff cuts under the Japan Australia Economic Partnership Agreement that came into force on 15 January 2015, with the most recent occurring on 1 April 2019.

And we have doubled our overseas Agriculture Counsellor network to expand our ability to access markets.

The Liberal Nationals Government has achieved 107 key technical market access gains, along with 94 key market improvements since January 2016. For example, cherries to Vietnam and extending shelf-life for vacuum-packaged Australian beef and sheep meat to the UAE.

### **Protecting our pest and disease free status**

Our pest and disease free status underpins our international reputation and export trade.

The Liberal Nationals Government injected an additional \$313 million to build a smarter and stronger biosecurity system to further protect us against unwanted pests, weeds and diseases.

And we strengthened our border protection against pests, weeds and diseases by delivering a new Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity with state and territory governments.

At home, we have invested \$208.3 million in a range of initiatives to reduce the impact of established pests, animals and weeds on farmers, land managers, the community and the environment. This has already reduced stock losses from wild dogs and improved ground cover and fodder.

As well, our Government is investing \$16.9 million to build a strong and effective fruit fly management system. This includes \$7.8 million to implement a national fruit fly research, development and extension program to modernise Australia's fruit fly management techniques.



### **Profiling the importance of bees to agriculture**

Pollinating bees are critical to ensuring the plants we grow produce the food we eat and the fibre we wear.

Without bees, two-thirds of Australian agricultural production would be at risk.

The Liberal and Nationals Government will invest \$1.5 million to promote the role of bees and their impact on the entire food chain. The effort, targeting all aspects of agricultural production, will help protect our pollinators and reducing their decline. AgriFutures Australia will coordinate, working closely with apiarist organisations.

We have also invested \$1.65 million in a honey bee genetic improvement program. This project could create gains of \$41 million in honey production over 25 years.

### **Unlocking investment**

We have invested in our farmers by establishing the \$4 billion Regional Investment Corporation to provide a range of loan products including:

- Farm investment loans to improve long-term strength, resilience and profitability, diversify markets, refinance existing debt and to prepare for, manage, or recover from, drought.
- Drought loans to prepare farm businesses for drought, manage and recover from the effects of drought or to refinance existing debt.
- Water infrastructure loans to accelerate construction of major projects, build sustainable water security and provide affordable water.

### **Historic investment in water infrastructure**

The Liberal Nationals Government is unlocking the potential of regional Australia with a record \$3 billion investment in water infrastructure.

We will work with state and territory governments to fast-track projects that will deliver greater water security for rural communities, increase jobs and support new and expanded agriculture.

Since coming to Government, we have co-invested in water infrastructure projects with state and territory governments including:

- \$190 million for the Myalup-Wellington Pipeline in Western Australia.
- \$176 million to construct Rookwood Weir in Central Queensland.
- \$45.6 million for the Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme in South Australia.
- \$30 million for the Macalister Irrigation Scheme in North East Victoria.
- \$25.27 million for the Scottsdale Irrigation Scheme in Tasmania.



We also understand it is not just about large-scale infrastructure projects.

That's why the Liberal Nationals Government is backing our farmers through the \$50 million On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme. The scheme is helping livestock producers in drought-affected areas to provide additional watering points and to desilt their dams.

All primary producers are also able to benefit from the Government's instant depreciation of \$25,000 for on-farm water investments. This will rise to \$30,000 for small businesses with a turnover of less than \$50 million.

### **Securing the future of the Great Artesian Basin**

We have ensured the long-term future of the Great Artesian Basin – a critical resource for communities in South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory – particularly in times of drought.

We have committed \$36.9 million over six years to the next phase of the GAB Sustainability Initiative, building on our \$8 million funding under the Interim Great Artesian Basin Infrastructure Investment Program.

We have also invested \$6.5 million towards ensuring governments have a much better understanding of the Great Artesian Basin, with Geoscience undertaking a Great Artesian Basin Water Balance Assessment.

### **Delivering for the Murray-Darling Basin and its communities**

The Murray-Darling Basin is the largest and most complex river system in Australia and accounts for more than \$22 billion worth of food and fibre every year.

The river system and surrounding environment form the heart of Basin communities. That's why decisions on the basin must deliver a true triple bottom line with economic, social and environmental outcomes.

We need to ensure that a healthy river system underpins community prosperity well into the future.

- We are on track to deliver the Basin Plan – in full without needing to adjust the buyback cap.
- We have invested more than \$2.5 billion since 2013 to recover 616GL of water and deliver it back to the environment – with \$2.25 billion of that through infrastructure modernisation and efficiency improvements and only \$29 million in open water buybacks, compared to Labor's \$2.1 billion in buybacks.
- We are investing more than \$136.2 million to enhance the Murray Darling Basin Authority's compliance and enforcement capability, implement measures to protect low flows in the Barwon-Darling, improve connectivity between rivers and support fish recovery.



- We are investing \$40 million to support cultural and economic water for the Basin's Indigenous communities – creating opportunities for them to secure real economic benefits.
- We are investing \$25 million to strengthen the economic and social resilience of 15 Basin communities through the Murray Darling Basin Economic Development Program.
- We have introduced legislation to ensure an Indigenous member on the Murray Darling Basin Authority.
- We have delivered key amendments to the Basin Plan that will deliver environmental benefits at a much lower social and economic cost for Basin communities.
- We are investing \$5 million in a Basin-wide Native Fish Management and Recovery Strategy. We've also provided an additional \$3 million to the CSIRO for ecosystem research.
- We have announced an independent panel to undertake a broad-ranging assessment of the social and economic conditions in irrigation communities across the Murray-Darling Basin.

### **Supporting our land stewards**

Our Government invested \$1.1 billion in the next phase of the National Landcare Program and continued our proud record of delivering long-term benefits to our farmers, communities, the economy and environment.

This funding includes \$134 million for Smart Farms and \$450 million for Regional Land Partnerships. Almost 50 local organisations are now benefiting from Regional Land Partnerships funding to deliver on-ground environment and sustainable agriculture projects.

### **Agriculture Biodiversity Stewardship Program**

Farmers and producers care for the land and the natural resources that help them produce clean and green food and fibre for Australians and the world.

To ensure farmers receive due recognition for their efforts, the \$30 million Agriculture Biodiversity Stewardship Program will encourage the adoption of improved biodiversity practices. The focus will be on small and medium farms, using tailored approaches to incentivise change. The Liberal and Nationals Government will invest in methodologies, monitoring and evaluation to quantify the benefits to production and biodiversity.

Projects that could be funded include maintaining or enhancing remnant forest, regeneration of gullies or waterways and creating shelter belts.

The Liberal and Nationals Government will also develop an Agriculture Biodiversity Policy to strengthen agriculture's role in improving Australia's biodiversity outcomes.



### **Australian Farm Biodiversity Certification Scheme**

The National Farmers Federation will receive \$4 million to develop and trial a biodiversity certification scheme to help biodiversity-friendly farmers achieve a premium for their product.

The aim is for Australian farms to showcase best-practice management of natural resources that is recognised and rewarded by consumers here and abroad.

### **Helping our farmers adapt to climate change**

Climate change poses production risks for the sector and the Government and our primary producers are actively preparing.

The Liberal Nationals Government is supporting our agriculture sector to adapt to climate change through:

- Rural research and investment to develop understanding, resources and tools to help producers better manage drought and climate impacts.
- The Managing Farm Risk Programme to provide better on-farm risk management.
- Funding improved seasonal forecasting tools to inform decision-making.
- Tax incentives including depreciation arrangements to encourage on-farm investment in preparedness.
- Establishing and topping up the now \$1 billion National Water Infrastructure Development Fund to secure farmers' water security.

We are making strategic investments (\$853 million so far) through the Clean Energy Finance Corporation to encourage agricultural businesses to reduce energy costs and improve productivity.

The Emissions Reduction Fund is also providing real benefits to landholders through emission reduction activities. Of the 193 million tonnes of abatement under the ERF, 157.4 million tonnes – more than 80 per cent – was contracted to the agriculture and land sectors.

Our \$300 million investment in Rural Research and Development Corporations is also helping to improve resilience to climate events, manage soil health and more efficiently manage our water resources.

### **Strengthening Country of Origin labelling**

We supported farmers by delivering on our election commitment to introduce clear and transparent Country of Origin labelling.



### **Building a world-class rural innovation system**

We have committed to building a world-class agricultural innovation system to ensure we continue to produce the best and most sustainable food and fibre.

Together with rural industries, our \$800 million a year investment means we can create fantastic jobs and give our kids the best opportunity to live and work in rural and regional Australia.

The Liberal and Nationals Government has already delivered a major review of Australia's agricultural innovation system. It found that we must modernise and be better coordinated to capture value for farmers and the sector.

The report outlines a roadmap to boost the capacity of our research and development system to deliver a more competitive, prosperous and sustainable agricultural industry.

We have invested \$2.9 million in national leadership to drive the change required to ensure a more coordinated, collaborative and commercially-focused approach to meeting agtech innovation needs. This includes making best use of our annual \$300 million investment in research and development.

Additionally, \$2 million has been invested in a one-stop shop for agricultural research and development through an online collaboration hub – ensuring we better broker and connect domestic and international agtech investment into outcomes for farmers.

### **Creating Jobs**

The Liberal Nationals Government has also supported decentralisation of a number of agricultural agencies because we believe country people have as much right to public service jobs as their city cousins. We have created jobs in Armidale and Orange and are committed to regional offices of the Murray Darling Basin Authority including Murray Bridge, Mildura, Griffith, Wodonga and Goondiwindi.

### **Delivering a stronger and sustainable fisheries sector**

Our Government manages Australia's fisheries carefully and sustainably.

Australia's seafood industry is valued at more than \$3.2 billion and supports more than 25,000 families. The industry plays an important role in securing Australia's food base, employment, economic activity and generating valuable export income.

For the fifth year in a row, no fish stocks solely managed by the Australian Government are considered to be overfished. This is testament to our strong, robust and science-based approach to fisheries.



In 2013, we promised to review, improve and implement Marine Plans in Commonwealth-managed waters, in close consultation with marine industries, the community and scientists – and we have delivered.

On 1 July 2018, five new management plans (covering 44 Australian Marine Parks) across the North, North-west, South-west, Temperate East and Coral Sea marine regions came into effect.

Covering more than 2.8 million sq km, the Marine Parks will deliver the strong protection and sustainability that benefits all Australians. They encompass 36 per cent of our oceans, well above the United Nations benchmark of 10 per cent – and we've done this in a balanced way that minimises impacts on commercial and recreational fishers.

To enable our fishing community to transition to these new arrangements, our Government has developed the \$35 million *Fisheries Assistance and User Engagement Package*.

Our updated *Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy* and *Commonwealth Fisheries Bycatch Policy* reflects our constant striving to improve sustainability. It maximises the economic viability of the commercial fleet, recognises the interests of recreational and Indigenous users and ensures Australian seafood is available for future generations.

We also recognise the contribution and potential of the aquaculture sector. In 2017, the Liberal Nationals Government released Australia's *National Aquaculture Strategy* with the aim of doubling the 2017 industry value to \$2 billion a year by 2027. The Liberal and Nationals Government remains committed to supporting the states and the Northern Territory to achieve this goal.

In 2018 the Liberal Nationals Government formed Australia's first National Fisheries Advisory Council (NFAC). The Council provides the Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources with information and advice on fisheries issues, proposed legislation and policies.

The Liberal and Nationals Government is ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Southern Bluefin Tuna stock.

We are supporting the Tuna Champion program, which aims to improve stewardship, fish handling and responsible fishing practices in the Southern Bluefin Tuna recreational sector. This will lead to reduced wastage, increased catch and release rates (with greater post-release survival rates) and more engagement in future recreational harvest surveys.

We also understand our inland waterways are highly valued and enjoyed by recreational anglers. Recreational fishing groups play an active role in restocking and rehabilitating inland rivers, streams and lakes.

The tragic fish deaths that occurred at Menindee and the lower Darling in December 2018 have been widely felt – from recreational fishers to communities along the Murray-Darling Basin river system.

We've responded with a range of measures addressing the findings of the independent report into the deaths, including:



- \$5 million for the development of a Basin-wide Native Fish Management and Recovery Strategy.
- Extending the Native Fish Demonstration Reach program to the lower Darling.
- Committing an extra \$3 million into Basin-wide monitoring and evaluation to maintain vigilance on the health of native fish stocks and the system as a whole.

### **A Strong, Innovative and Sustainable Forestry Sector**

A long-term forestry plan is important because growing trees is a long-term business.

The Liberal and Nationals Government understands the need for a balanced approach to forestry.

And our \$20 million National Forest Industries Plan: *Growing a Better Australia – A Billion Trees for Jobs and Growth* delivers this.

One billion new plantation trees over a decade will create 18,000 new jobs and help meet a quadrupling in global demand for timber by 2050.

This is on top of the around 52,000 Australians already employed in the sector and the tens of thousands more indirect jobs.

To achieve 1 billion new plantation trees, we need to plant the right trees at the right scale and in the right places.

Our Government has already announced a \$12.5 million investment in the Regional Forestry Hubs and research and development elements of our plan, which will help meet our target.

The Hubs bring key players together from strategic forestry areas to look at that region's unique strengths, opportunities and barriers to growth.

To boost innovation, research and product development, in collaboration with governments and industry, we are also delivering centres of National Institute of Forest Products Innovation in South Australia and Tasmania, with at least two more to come.

The Liberal and Nationals Government, in partnership with Forestry and Wood Products Australia, has committed \$200,000 for two forestry education activities: a new National University Challenge for innovative uses of wood residues or timber products (prizes total up to \$100,000) and the development of a virtual reality tool. The VR tool will bolster forestry education in nine secondary schools, highlighting the renewable cycle of forests.



Regional Forestry Agreements (RFAs) are the best mechanism for balancing environmental, economic and social demands on our native forests, as well as giving the industry confidence for the future.

The Liberal Nationals Government has also delivered on its commitment to 20-year rolling RFA agreements. We have renewed and extended the Tasmanian, NSW and Western Australian RFAs, with a short extension to the Victorian RFAs ahead of a longer-term renewal that is being negotiated.

These achievements are no accident. They are due to our Government's strong investments in the forestry sector, which we want to see prosper and grow.

## THE CHOICE

Only the Liberal and Nationals Government has a plan for the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector.

Australia's farmers know they can only rely on the Liberal and Nationals Government to stand with them in the good times and bad – we have their back.

We know that when our farmers prosper, our regional communities thrive.

Agriculture is just not on Labor's radar, which signals a return to the bad old days that the sector experienced under previous Labor governments.

When last in office Labor inflicted six long years of neglect and anti-agricultural policies on Australian farmers to appease the Greens.

Between 2007 and 2013, Labor's agriculture funding was slashed from \$3.8 billion to \$1.7 billion. Labor has already promised to burden farmers with unnecessary and unprecedented new federal environmental regulations and increase the cost of doing business through additional taxes.

Labor has no interest in unlocking the potential of our regional communities, securing their water supply, creating jobs and delivering agricultural economic opportunities.

Labor will revert to the lock-up and lock-out approach of its 2012 Marine Park plans. This poses a significant risk to our fishing industry and the environment, and flies in the face of the overwhelming support for the Liberal and Nationals Government's plans from stakeholders, non-government organisations and fishers. Labor's plans will also lock out recreational fishers from over a third of marine parks.



Australians have a choice between the Liberal and Nationals Government that supports the forestry sector as one of the most renewable resources of the 21st century – or a Labor/Greens Government seeking to take us back to the dark days of forest lock-ups.

When last in government, Labor's policies (backed by the Greens) decimated our forest product industries, especially in Tasmania – led by former Wilderness Society campaigner Tony Burke.

## THE COST

The Liberals and Nationals will invest an additional \$43.4 million to secure a stronger agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector. This is on top of the \$36.4 million additional funding for drought and \$30 million for showcasing agriculture.

