

# Rural Affairs

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## AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS ACTION PLAN RURAL AFFAIRS REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT & SERVICES

The Australian Democrats recognise the unique challenges of remote outback life and have a strong record of delivering for rural and regional Australia in the Senate. We have stood up for the interests of the regions on the sale of Telstra, taxation, health, education, national competition policy, agriculture and the environment.

The Democrats see thriving rural and regional communities as critical to Australia's future. We recognise that each region will find its own path to social and economic development, and see the role of Government as helping communities meet their potential rather than imposing strategies from above.

*“A fair go for  
industries, decent  
services and high  
quality  
communications are  
crucial to the future of  
rural Australia”*

**Senator Andrew Bartlett**

### **We are committed to:**

- Supporting the expansion of high quality, accessible and affordable broadband and other communications services into rural and regional areas;
- Supporting and promoting tourism into rural areas;
- Better services in rural and regional communities;
- Ensuring a firm guarantee of community service obligations in telecommunications and other utilities;
- Investigation and monitoring of the disparity between the prices of supermarket food and the return to producers, and ensuring that the *Trade Practices Act* is strong enough to prevent misuse of market power by big corporations against farmers and small business;
- Promotion of innovative ideas for rural and regional revival, with an emphasis on supporting community-generated development initiatives;
- Encouraging regional economic development organisations, and backing them up with 'incubator centres', grants and research support necessary to get new businesses off the ground;
- Appropriate protection for Australian food producers against risky imports that threaten both local industry and the environment, and opposing any diminution of Australian quarantine standards in trade negotiations;
- Addressing the serious shortage of teachers, doctors and skilled workers in many regional areas;
- Propose more flexible funding to improve GP and other medical services to rural areas currently missing out on Medicare dollars;
- support for regionally-based tax concessions, particularly in remote regions;



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- The further encouragement, through tax incentives or grants of conservation and restoration of farming land by landowners;
- Support for the continuation and expansion of Landcare;
- A continuing national commitment to address salinity and land and water degradation, picking up on the agenda developed by the National Farmers Federation and the Australian Conservation Foundation;
- A continuing effort to foster multilateral, rather than unilateral, trade liberalisation, and the inclusion of issues such as labour standards and environmental protection;
- Encouraging organic farming, including the continuation of strict registration standards and close scrutiny of the development of genetically modified crops;
- Encouraging value-adding where possible as close as practicable to the point of production;
- Promoting the development of renewable energy industries (e.g. ethanol, solar and other renewable power, biomass power generation) as a new source of jobs and wealth in regional areas.

## A proven track record:

- Secured \$16m to help landowners preserve wetlands adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef;
- Won \$40 million increase in funds for dairy adjustment assistance while continuing to oppose dairy deregulation;
- Helped force the Government to reduce the tax on wool producers from 12 to 5%;
- Successfully amended tax laws to provide concessions for the donation of land for conservation purposes;
- Initiated a Senate Inquiry into weeds and other invasive species;
- Exposed the truth on foreign fruit import risk assessments;
- Responsible for establishment of independent inquiry into Wheat Export Authority;
- Trebled cellar door exemption for wine sellers;
- Instigated an inquiry into food price disparities;
- Won an extra \$50 million a year in excise concessions on ethanol and biofuels;
- Initiated a Senate inquiry into rural water use;
- Established minimum standards for Australia Post deliveries in rural Aust;
- Consistently voted against selling Telstra;
- Forced the government to restore tax deductions to farmer co-operatives;
- Forced Biosecurity Australia to ban the legal importation of two designated Weeds of National Significance.



### CONTACT US

(03) 9416 1880

Lv 1, 62 Wellington Parade, East Melbourne VIC 3002

[inquiries@democrats.org.au](mailto:inquiries@democrats.org.au)

Authorised by Jack Evans, 5 Poinciana Place, Wanneroo WA 6065  
Printed by Senator Lyn Allison, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600