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Morrison heads to bush for drought update

- **Paul Osborne**



 Prime Minister Scott Morrison will meet with drought advisers in the regional NSW town of Orange.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison will get an update on the drought and north Queensland flood recovery when he meets with advisers in the regional NSW town of Orange on Tuesday.

The meeting comes as an extra 52 local councils are set to benefit up to the tune of \$1 million each from a \$47 million drought communities program.

"While we know the nation has been gripped in recent months by the bushfire crisis I want all Australians impacted by drought to know that you have remained firmly in our government's focus," Mr Morrison said.

"You remain at the centre of relief, response and recovery plans for the future and making Australia more resilient to these challenges in the future."

The plan involves providing \$500,000 to councils of fewer than 1000 people and \$1 million to larger councils.

The funding is expected to support tourism projects and new infrastructure.

As well, \$10 million has been added to a program to ensure families affected by drought are supported to continue accessing education in NSW, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia.

Many non-government schools have been taking money out of their own pockets to waive or subsidise fees to ensure that families can continue to send their children to school.

In early December, Mr Morrison announced the National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency, led by former Northern Territory chief minister Shane Stone.

The agency was an expansion of the North Queensland Livestock Industry Recovery Agency.

Tuesday will be the first meeting of the drought and flood advisory board.

The government has in place a three-stage strategy for dealing with the drought, including immediate action to help farmers, support for regional communities and long-term resilience and preparedness.

More than \$3.3 billion has been paid or committed by the government to assist in the 2019 north Queensland flood recovery.

Mr Stone has been travelling throughout Queensland, the Northern Territory and NSW taking note of ideas to make a difference in the lives of those hit by the floods and drought.

"We expect that whatever we implement will be locally designed and implemented," he told one of the local meetings held in Tenterfield last week.

Australian Associated Press