

HRDWG UPDATE

HRDWG monthly update

The final report outlining the findings from the “**Drought Response Recovery & Resilience in Hume Region**” workshop held towards the end of February, has been received and indeed provides some guiding principles for setting up longer term governance arrangements for response, recovery and resilience within the Hume Region.

The purpose of this workshop was:

- To review the effectiveness of current interagency arrangements for drought response and recovery.
- To identify the best model for meeting the challenges ahead.

The report validates the outcomes of the workshop and incorporates a summary of what has worked, what has not worked, a range of alternative structures displaying a number of common elements, and recommendations to refer to in further developing a model that will best represent the Hume Region.

The drought response has led to significant cross government communication, coordination and relationship building. This is an asset that may prove to be invaluable if utilised for many other issues across government requiring coordination. Anticipation of change, and a proactive approach to the shaping and coordination of regional responses, will be points to consider when the HRDWG meet to develop a new drought/climate change governance proposal to be submitted to the Hume Regional Managers Forum early June.

Distribution: Hume Region Drought Working Group, Hume Regional Managers Forum, Local Government Drought Committees, other drought support organisations and front counter staff.

*To view any of the Adobe Acrobat files, you will need **Adobe Reader**. Follow this link for the latest version of [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#)*

NEWS

Drought Co-ordinator FOR BENALLA

Kim Scanlon has been appointed as Drought Coordinator for the Benalla Rural City Council. Kim's position has been funded for 18 months through a grant from the Department of Planning and Community Development. Her role is to facilitate drought support activities across the Benalla Rural City, and support different sectors of the community that are struggling with the sustained drought conditions.

Last year Benalla Rural City Council had to cope with the impact of the drought, but also with the devastating bushfires that hit the southern part of the rural city. Council's Drought Strategy Committee actively supported residents through a series of events that reached all sections of the community; from information sessions for farmers and small business, to “pamper” days for farming women and from footy trips to Melbourne, to a free concert in the Benalla Gardens. The appointment of a Drought Coordinator will see further development of programs that will help ease the burden of drought for all.

Contact details: Kim Scanlon, Drought Coordinator - Benalla Rural City Council 03 5761 2247 Kim.Scanlon@benalla.vic.gov.au

Calendar of Drought Events GOES LIVE

A calendar listing drought related events in the Hume Region is now live and can be found on the [DPI website](#).

This calendar can be viewed by anyone with internet access. Therefore, community members, local government, agency and service providers alike can refer to this calendar to view up-and-coming and events recently held within our region.

Two key functions of this calendar are

- to promote events region wide, and
- to act as an informant to local government, agency and service providers, in turn creating opportunities to work together on like minded events.

If you have an event you would like placed on this calendar please send the details through to [Toni Eames](mailto:toni.eames@dpi.vic.gov.au)

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FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to all of you who have, in the recent months, come on board as drought service providers within the Hume Region.

As you undoubtedly have discovered it can be a rather colossal task to get your head around what services are available within our region not to mention who your key contacts might be.

If you, or those of you who have been in these roles for a while now, can identify a way this newsletter can assist you to ingest the most relevant information you require to hit the ground running, please forward these through to me.

NB. Any stories for the next issue need to be with me by the second Friday in the month.

Regards,
Toni Eames
Ph: 02 6030 4614
Email: toni.eames@dpi.vic.gov.au

NEWS

NEW CALL BACK SERVICE Supports At Risk and Isolated Australians

A new telephone counselling service has been launched by the commonwealth Department of Health and Aging to help ensure isolated and rural Australians at risk of suicide have access to professional, ongoing support via the telephone.

Managed by Crisis Support Services, the new Suicide Call Back Service (SCBS) has been funded for a three year period, and has been designed to fill the gaps in service delivery that exist post emergency admission and post incarceration.

The aim of the SCBS is to reduce the national suicide rates and the frequency of hospital admissions. The nationwide service provides approximately six 50 minute sessions of telephone counselling to every client. The frequency of these calls can be decided by the client, dependent on their individual needs.

During each of these sessions, clients are supported through counselling, information and referral. Sessions focus on the maintenance of safety for all individuals and encourage self responsibility throughout this process.

The SCBS counsellors are highly trained in risk assessment, crisis management and solution focused interventions. The service is run according to evidence based processes and relies on feedback from clients for this purpose.

To be eligible, clients must be isolated, unsupported and be at risk of suicide (or supporting someone who is at risk). Clients who are bereaved by suicide are also eligible. To access the service, clients need to contact Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

If you would like more information on this project please contact: Stacey Roe, Suicide Call-Back Service Project Co-ordinator, Crisis Support Services PO Box 2335, Footscray VIC 3011 Ph: 03 8371 2800 sroe@crisissupport.org.au www.crisissupport.org.au

City people keen to LEARN ABOUT FARMING

Farmers will again have the unique opportunity to showcase their way of life to city dwellers when the second national Farm Day takes place on 24 & 25 May 2008.

"We've had a great response with over 700 families registered so far. However, we need more farmers to take part so we can match all our city families", says Farm Day founder Deb Bain.

Farm Day was piloted in 2006 with the intent of generating 'fun, friendship and understanding'. Independent research has found it was successful in all three areas.

The warm country hospitality extended by the 2007 farm hosts, and the openness of their city visitors to learn, resulted in an overwhelming positive response to the initiative from city visitors. 94% described the experience as "very" or "extremely" enjoyable.



For more information on Farm Day, and to register to be part of this great initiative, go to www.farmday.com.au

REPORTS

Dry Seasonal Conditions in Rural Victoria

The DPI's Dry Seasonal Conditions (DSC) reports are produced monthly.
[DPI - Vic Dry Seasonal Conditions Report](#)

Managing Climate Risk in Rural Victoria

"The Break" produced monthly. [DPI - The Break Newsletter](#)

Do you know of a report that would be of benefit to us all?

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Department of Human Services**MONTHLY UPDATE**

At the end of March, DHS drought funding from the October 2007 allocation was distributed. This 'one off' funding was targeted at the emergency relief sector and mental health promotion.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) has been the main intervention used by DHS in mental health promotion. Many LGA's did not receive the MHFA courses they were allocated funds for at the end of 2006. This was, for the most part, due to a lack of trained MHFA facilitators in the Region. For this reason, training of more MHFA facilitators was considered a priority for DHS, with 8 LGAs targeted for both facilitator training and to receive MHFA courses (two courses to be delivered in each of the LGAs). The funds for facilitator training have been distributed through the Primary Care Partnerships (PCPs).

Another part of the mental health promotion funding has been allocated, on a PCP basis, to providing some ability to increase the roll out of the school based Friends for Life program (see <http://www.friendsinfo.net/index.html> for more information). This program requires the purchase of workbooks – a resource that has been prohibitive to many courses going ahead. The funding provided is to be used for workbook purchase, as many people are already trained to deliver the program.

The emergency relief sector, as many of you will be aware, play a key role in supporting individuals and families in need. With the economic impacts of the drought affecting the ability of many families to put food on the table, emergency relief agencies are key agencies in the drought intervention. For this reason, DHS on a regional basis, allocated just over \$50,000 to support the emergency relief sector to link more strongly with the wider health and welfare sector. In the Hume Region this funding has been allocated to Anglicare and the Moira Foodbank. This will compliment the additional capacity that has been provided to VicRelief Foodbank to fund a 0.4EFT position in each rural region to provide improved coordination of emergency relief groups and organisations.

Kirsten Green, Regional Recovery Worker (Drought)

DHS – Hume Region 03 57220530 kirsten.green@dhs.vic.gov.au

MEDIA WATCH

Newsprint Stories

THE AGE 25TH April By: Orietta Guerrero – **FIFTH-GENERATION YARRAWONGA FARMER BREAKS WITH TRADITION TO SOW GM CANOLA**

It has been a busy few days for Yarrowonga farmer Evan Ryan as he labours to get canola seeds into the ground before rain forecast for this weekend.

[The Age – GM Canola](#)

THE WEEKLY TIMES 23RD April By: Peter Hunt – **BRUMBY ANNOUNCES \$205M RURAL BOOST**

Victorian farming will today receive a \$205 million boost. Weeds, farmer extension services, climate change and rail upgrades lead the spending charge in the Victorian Government's Future Farming package.

[The Weekly Times – Future Farming Package](#)

DPI Media Release

23rd April – **LAND AND BIODIVERSITY COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS**

Community workshops are being held throughout May across all Victorian regions to introduce the Brumby Government's Land and Biodiversity Green Paper launched this month.

[DPI – Media Release](#)

22nd April – **DROUGHT RELIEF EXTENDS A NEIGHBOURLY HELPING HAND**

The Brumby Government has expanded drought assistance to rural families with a \$50,000 partnership with the Victorian Farmers Federation to help battle stress and improve mental health, as part of its *Sustaining Community Wellbeing* package.

[DPI – Media Release](#)

14th April – **MERCURIO'S MENU PUTS VICTORIAN PRODUCE ON THE MAP**

Three Victorian episodes of television series Mercurio's Menu will help promote Victorian primary producers across Australia, Agriculture Minister Joe Helper said today.

[DPI – Media Release](#)

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

BENALLA REACHING OUT

Ivan Lister has been working as the Hume Corridor’s Rural Outreach worker since 2002, serving the areas of Benalla and Violet Town.

Ivan is a crucial part of the Benalla Rural City Council’s Drought Strategy. His visits to farmers and small business people provide the link between the people that are under stress and the organisations that can help them, such as Centrelink or Health providers.

As Ivan says, “I knock on farmer’s doors and see how people are going. I visit them in their home environment. The prolonged stress of the drought is a huge problem, and I see this stress impact directly on families”.

Ivan’s first hand experiences are used as the impetus for projects that the Benalla Rural City Council’s Drought Strategy Committee create to help rural residents. It is a team effort between Council, Delatite Community Health, health providers, service clubs and the rural communities that they serve. Given the present weather conditions, this team effort will continue for some time to come.

Contact details: Ivan Lister, Rural Outreach Worker:
Hume Corridor Phone: 0407 856 374

Mental Health First Aid Training

The drought has put many people under severe stress. We not only have to watch our money but every drop of water is precious, especially if the water is needed on the farm for stock, crops, pasture, as well as people.

Because we worry about all this and we worry about our family and friends who also worry about this, it’s useful to stop and think about the signs that say someone is not travelling too well and needs some support.

This course will help in the understanding of many aspects of Mental Health, when intervention is needed and how to help.

The next one to be held will be in Whitfield early May. The course is free and light refreshments will be provided.

If you would like to know more follow this link to the [Drought Calendar of Events](#) or contact: **Adele Davies, Program Manager, The Centre for Continuing Education** Chisholm Street, Wangaratta 3677 Ph: (03) 5721 0221 adele.davies@thecentre.vic.edu.au
<http://www.thecentre.vic.edu.au>

DHS Supported Counsellors/Outreach Workers in the Hume Region

Area Covered	Counsellor Name	Contact number
Indigo, Towong, Wodonga	Naomi Mason, UHCHS	02 6022 8888
Alpine, Benalla, Mansfield, Wangaratta	Ruth Malpass Jane Rushworth	03 5723 4000
Moira (Nathalia focus)	Rachel Robertson	0427 840 430
Moira	Jackie Star	03 5743 3200
Shepparton, (Strathbogie and Mitchell in emergency)	Terry Reed	03 5823 7000
Area Covered	Outreach Worker Name	Contact number
Strathbogie (Violet Town focus), Benalla	Ivan Lister	0407 856 374

Counselling Hotlines

Lifeline	131 114	Mensline	1300 78 99 78
Parentline	132 289	Kids helpline	1800 551 800

Do you know of any support available through community organisations and industry groups?

If so, please forward info through to toni.eames@dpi.vic.gov.au

SUPPORT INITIATIVES

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE

The [Drought Assistance Guide](#) is the latest (Feb08) summary of drought assistance measures provided by the Australian, State and Territory Governments.

The guide is maintained by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) to assist farmers and agriculture-dependent small businesses find out what assistance is available in drought affected areas.

If you have not yet seen it, this a great guide to refer to.

This and other helpful drought publications can be accessed on the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry website via the following link [DAFF - Drought publications](#).

Financial Counselling

Financial counselling is available from one of Victoria's Rural Financial Counselling services.

Rural Financial Counsellors can provide free, independent financial assessment for farming families and small rural businesses. This includes services for people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

For a list of Rural Financial Counsellors in your area contact DPI on 136 186 or visit [Rural Financial Counsellors - Victoria](#)

Exceptional Circumstances (EC)

Fact sheets, maps of areas covered by EC declarations and the relevant dates can be viewed at the [Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry](#)

To access EC support farmers need a certificate that their farm is in an eligible area. These are available via [Centrelink Drought Assistance](#) on 132 316.

For information on EC income support contact [Centrelink Drought Assistance](#) (external link) on 132 316.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONTACTS

Local Government Key Drought Contacts

To access contact details for a wider range of service providers in your local area please contact your Local Government Drought representative or follow the links to view your shires homepage.

Shire (click on link to access website)	Key Drought Contact (click on name to email)	Office number
Alpine Shire	Jan Mock , Economic Response Officer	03 5755 0555
Benalla Rural City	Kim Scanlon , Drought Coordinator	03 5761 2247
City of Greater Shepparton	Janet Congues , Drought Recovery Officer	03 5832 9700
Indigo Shire	Sally MCCarron , Health & Wellbeing Manager	03 5728 8020
Mansfield Shire	Kevin Murphy , Senior Environmental Health Officer	03 5775 8544
Mitchell Shire	Rob McVernon , General Manager Community & Recreation	03 5734 6252
Moira Shire	Sally Rice , Community Development Officer Kaye Thomson , Manager Community Development	03 5871 9222
Murrindindi Shire	Tammy Fallon , Executive Assistant	03 5786 1522
Rural City of Wangaratta	Ann Heywood , Executive Manager – Community & Social Planning	03 5722 0807
Strathbogie Shire	Caroline Harlow , Drought Coordinator	03 5795 0000
Towong Shire	Gerard Van Emmerik , Manager Community Services	02 6071 5100
City of Wodonga	Debbie Mackinlay , Recovery Manager	02 6022 9300