

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

HRDWG UPDATE

FUTURE DIRECTION

The Hume Region Working Group would like to thank all those who attended the successful “**Drought Response Recovery & Resilience in Hume Region**” workshop held on Monday 25th February.

The workshop facilitated by Susan Benedyka, Regional Development Company, was attended by Regional Managers & senior delegates of State Government departments, Local Government CEO's & Drought Coordinators, and the Hume Region Drought Working Group.

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.

It was a general consensus within this group that, regardless of the weather the impact of the current drought will be felt financially for some time yet. Our communities will be facing **ongoing** challenges with structural adjustment, adapting to climate change and a water constrained future.

The findings generated from this workshop are now to be collated and reviewed to further develop a model that will best represent the Hume Region. This is anticipated to be implemented early April.

Drought Services Co-ordinator FOR THE ALPVALLEYS

Anne Shaw has been appointed as Drought Services Coordinator for the Australian Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum. Anne's role covers Alpine, Indigo and Towong Shires, the Rural City of Wangaratta and the City of Wodonga.

This is a six month position, funded by the Department of Primary Industries in response to requests for more drought support. Anne's role is to support existing drought committees and will also focus on young people in the agribusiness sector and future planning.

Contact details:

Anne Shaw
Drought Services Co-ordinator
Mob: 0458 216 088
anne.shaw@alpvalleys.com.au

DPI Drought Support Officer – HUME REGION

Department of Primary Industries have recently welcomed aboard Toni Eames as a, Drought Support Officer for the Hume Region. Toni is one of three drought support officers working within DPI across northern Victoria.

Toni's role within the Hume Region is to assist in coordinating information between different levels of government and the various agencies and organisations involved in providing drought support.

This includes assisting with developing a network service map, an online calendar of events and regular newsletters to capture the drought activities and programs across the region. Toni will also assist in identifying any gaps and duplication in services and opportunities for improvements.

Toni will work closely with DPI's already established drought network, particularly linking the HRDWG with the Statewide Drought Communications network.

An important focus of all Drought Support officers is to assist DPI's frontline drought response staff to better provide services to their regions.

Contact details:

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Drought Support Officer – Hume Region
Department of Primary Industries
1145 Chiltern Valley Road
Rutherglen VIC 3685
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Follow this link for the latest version of [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#)

CONTENTS

HRDWG UPDATE 1
 NEWS 2
 MEDIA WATCH 3
 REPORTS 3
 HEALTH & WELLBEING 4
 SUPPORT INITIATIVES 5

FROM THE EDITOR

Hello, and welcome to the first HRDWG Newsletter for 2008.

The objective of this newsletter is to act as a portal in delivering information to you that will assist in providing drought support within your local communities.

This is your newsletter, and I encourage you all to provide feedback as to what you would like to read each month.

I look forward to working with you all in further building a region to be credited for its vigour, and alliance in an ever changing climate.

*Regards,
 Toni Eames*

Ph: 02 6030 4614
 Email: toni.eames@dpi.vic.gov.au

NEWS

ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN LOCAL FACES

The Department of Primary Industries is looking for landholders/farming families who may have accessed drought grants, such as the On Farm Productivity Grant, or used a DPI staff member to help them through a Whole Farm Plan, water budget, feed budget etc or perhaps done something a little differently to what they might have normally - perhaps grown a different crop or adjusted the property to better equip for drought conditions.

DPI is looking for landholders/farming families to appear in some local advertisements that will promote drought support services.

If you know of any farmers that would like to participate in this campaign please contact Toni Eames on 02 6030 4614 or toni.eames@dpi.vic.gov.au at your earliest convenience.



THE HARD YARD

Last year DPI released a DVD in which farming families from across Victoria share their stories about the pressures of rural life. In response to demand more copies are currently being produced.

In the DVD, titled The Hard Yard – Stories of Farming Life, farmers, children and community organisations tell their stories about how rural communities manage the tough challenges of farming life, including drought, fires, flood, frost, pests and disease.

Phone for your FREE copy of the DVD

Jointly funded by the Department of Primary Industries and the Department of Human Services, the DVD is available by contacting:

Drought Information Line on 136 186

or

Toni Eames at DPI on 02 6030 4614 toni.eames@dpi.vic.gov.au

To view this DVD online follow the link below

[Hard Yard DVD online](#)

What do you want to read??

Suggestions & articles to be sent to...

toni.eames@dpi.vic.gov.au

Calendar of Events

TO GO LIVE

A calendar listing all drought related events in the Hume Region is soon to go live on the DPI Website!!!

NEWS

WOMEN CELEBRATE

Assistance required

Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE) have received a small grant from VicHealth to run a **Women's Celebration Concert** which will be a fun night for women to get together and have a great time with music, food and dancing.

This project fits in with the ongoing Women Gathering project, which is a response to the devastating drought and fire in our region. The project aims to bring women together, particularly isolated women, for friendship and support in these very difficult times in rural Victoria.

By providing subsidies for travel, childcare and attendance costs, women who would typically find these events inaccessible due to isolation, financial or cultural reasons will now be given the opportunity to attend.

A tentative date of the 16th May has been booked for the event to be held in Wangaratta (dependent on the main act and venue).

Members of various groups and women within the community who would like to assist in the organisation of this event are encouraged to attend a meeting planned for the 19th March at 7.30pm. Please note the date, place and time are flexible to accommodate those who are interested in participating.

For more information please contact: Julie Tyler at Women's Health Goulburn North east on 03 5722 3009 J.Tyler@whealth.com.au

REPORTS

Dry Seasonal Conditions in Rural Victoria

The DPI's Dry Seasonal Conditions (DSC) reports are produced monthly. They provide information on the current and recent weather, water resources, social and economic indicators, regional reports and DPI's response.
[DPI - Vic Dry Seasonal Conditions Report](#)

Managing Climate Risk in Rural Victoria

Grain growers can access seasonal climate risk information in one easy location in "The Break" produced monthly. The newsletter describes credible seasonal outlooks, generates potential crop yields from decision support computer tools, provides links and highlights topical climate risk information.
[DPI - The Break Newsletter](#)

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

If so forward the details to Toni on...
toni.eames@dpi.vic.gov.au

MEDIA WATCH

Television Broadcasts

FOUR CORNERS 17th March
Reporter: Quentin McDermott – **"WINDS OF CHANGE"**

Will climate change revolutionise Australian agriculture? As vast tracts of land grow drier and harder to farm, will struggling farmers get out or get smart?

Follow the link to view or read the transcript [ABC Four Corners - "WINDS OF CHANGE"](#)

Newsprint Stories

THE WEEKLY TIMES 12TH March By: David McKenzie – **DROUGHT POLICY SHAKE-UP ON WAY**

DROUGHT policies are facing a major overhaul as part of the Federal Government's push to prepare farmers for climate change.

[The Weekly Times - Drought policy shake-up on way](#)

THE AUSTRALIAN 18th March By: Asa Wahlquist – **RAIN ON THE HORIZON, BUT NONE HERE**

Crookwell farmer Charles Laverty - His property, two hours drive southwest of the city, has remained steadfastly devoid of rain and is now enduring its seventh year of drought.

[The Australian - Rain on the horizon, but none here](#)

THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW 25th February By: Matthew Cranston – **LUCRATIVE NEW LEASE OF LIFE FOR FARMERS**

Leasing out the farm is increasing around Australia, making farming more affordable as well as serving as a way for older generations to remain attached to their livelihoods.

[AFR - Lucrative new lease of life for farmers](#)

DPI Media Release

18th March - **DROUGHT ON-FARM PRODUCTIVITY GRANTS ON TRACK FOR \$3M**

Drought-hit farmers are on track to receive more than \$3 million in On-Farm Productivity Grants to improve their ability to manage drought, Agriculture Minister Joe Helper announced today.

[DPI - Drought Media Releases](#)

HEALTH AND WELLBEING



Last week the Victorian Government launched the inaugural Premier's Active Families Challenge as part of its 'Go for your life' program. It's a family-focused program encouraging people to get more active and be healthier together.

To complete the challenge, participants are asked to do at least 30 minutes of physical activity a day for 30 days between 9 March and 20 April 2008. The challenge will be supported by a statewide media campaign, including a 32-page lift-out guide in the Herald Sun on 4 March.

Information about registration, prizes and incentives (including 15 free YMCA passes and a 10 per cent discount at Rebel Sport stores) are available on the [Go for your life](http://www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au) website.

<http://www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au/>

Counselling Hotlines

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

DHS supporting Hume Region

Kirsten Green is the new primary DHS contact for drought matters in the Hume Region. Kirsten started with the department earlier this year in the capacity of Regional Recovery Worker and is based in Wangaratta. Kirsten is keen to make contact with all drought committees within the region, so please feel free to contact Kirsten if you have any questions.

Contact Details: Kirsten Green, Regional Recovery Worker
 Department of Human Services - Hume Region
 PO Box 460, Wangaratta, 3676. (Rowan Street, Wangaratta)
 Tel: 03 5722 0530 Mobile: 0439 372 450 Fax: 03 5722 0550
 Email: kirsten.green@dhs.vic.gov.au

DEALING WITH STRESS

There is a range of counselling and personal support services available for people experiencing personal or family pressures as a result of drought or other issues.

Dealing with stressful events is often helped by talking it over whether with a local GP, clergy, telephone help lines or local counselling and support services.

Services Available

The Department of Human Services

The [Department of Human Services](#) is working with the Victorian Government Drought Taskforce and the Department of Primary Industries to support communities affected by the prolonged period of drought.

DHS has a [Drought page](#) providing links to counselling services and also to a range of useful publications including "Losing the Farm" and "Suggestions for Farm Families in Crisis".

The following programs are an example of how DHS is strengthening the existing drought response by providing more specialist mental health and counselling services in rural Victoria.

To view a PDF of these initiatives please follow the links attached.

[Mental Health Early Intervention Teams](#) (PDF 23kb).

[Counselling services](#) (PDF 26kb)

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

The Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry provides support for farmers considering future alternatives to farming as part of the Farm Help Program.

To view more on this program please follow the link below.

[DAFF - Drought Assistance](#)

Beyondblue

beyondblue is a national organisation working to address issues associated with depression, anxiety and related substance misuse disorders in Australia.

To access the website follow the link below or call 1300 22 4636.

[beyondblue](#)

SUPPORT INITIATIVES

RATE SUBSIDY CONTINUES

The 2007/08 municipal rate subsidy continues to be available to eligible farming families in Victoria. Claims for the subsidy must be finalised by **Friday, 30 May 2008**.

Ratepayers wishing to claim the subsidy must present all evidence required to confirm their eligibility and pay the full balance owing to council by COB on this date, Tony Fay Senior Policy Analyst for DPI advised recently.

Council claims for reimbursement should be lodged with DPI Finance and Business Services Branch by **Friday, 6 June 2008**.

For more information on the Victorian EC [municipal rate subsidy](#) contact DPI on 136 186.

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.

A COMPREHENSIVE Guide

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 link provided below.

[DAFF - Drought publications](#)

FARMING INFORMATION for Victoria's Drought affected farmers

A variety of material is available on the DPI website for drought affected farmers. A sample of what can be accessed is listed below.

DPI Information Notes

A range of [Information Notes on Drought](#) are available on dealing with cattle, sheep, horses, goats, horticulture, paddock protection, soils, water, finances and small farms. Two new Notes on horses are now available; *Feed Budgets for Horses*, and *Horses, Drought and Winter - Things to Consider*.

Fruitcheque Drought Strategy

The DPI's [Fruitcheque](#) is a project working with fruit, berry and nut growers that provides drought strategy information covering planning, thinning, water requirements, etc

To view the full range of information available, follow the link below.

[DPI - Farming Info](#)

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