

## NEWS

## Rural Futures Initiative



*Younger farmers enjoy the opportunity to meet and discuss common issues.*

Rural areas in Victoria are undergoing significant change. Climate changes, increasing competition for natural resources and threats to agricultural competitiveness are shaping the future of agricultural industries and farming communities at an unprecedented rate.

Change presents both opportunities and challenges for farmers and their communities. In response to change, farm businesses and farming families begin to think, plan and make important decisions about their future. There is a need to ensure that farmers, industries and communities in rural Victoria are supported to make the best possible decisions, using the most up to date and relevant information.

DPI's Rural Futures Initiative (RFI) project, funded under the Victorian Government's Future Farming Strategy, is working with farming communities experiencing rapid change to improve understanding of the trends and drivers of change, and their possible implications for agriculture. The project has been funded for another 4 years following successful pilot projects in 7 areas of Victoria in 2007/08 and will work with 12 farming communities per annum.

As a part of the RFI project a Rural Futures Young Farmers Forum was held at Rutherglen on 21 July 2008. The forum was led by the Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum in partnership with DPI. Over 40 of the regions younger farmers came to hear an expert panel of guest speakers present many of the current hot topics such as climate change, local farm demographic changes and succession planning.

'We are delighted to have had such a strong response to the Young Farmers Forum, said Anne Shaw, AAVAF Drought Services Co-Ordinator. "The forum attracted young farmers from right across the region, with many travelling several hours to attend. The Young Farmers Forum, delivered very up to date and vitally important information to the key group in attendance, ensuring they are well armed with the information to make well informed decisions in the not too distant future."

For further information about the Rural Futures Initiative contact Yvonne Orlando at DPI on 0355223448 or 0418348281.

## Mitchell Shire to receive a DROUGHT COORDINATOR

Mitchell Shire Council has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with FamilyCare and Lower Hume Primary Care Partnership for the provision of a Drought Coordinator who will work with communities impacted by the drought to coordinate and communicate the various drought support activities being undertaken by local, state and federal governments. The Drought Coordinator will also act as secretariat to the Mitchell Drought Strategy Committee. The position is being funded through the State Government's Drought Coordinator Program and will provide \$75,000 over 18 months. This position will also support activities in Murrindindi Shire. The position will be based in FamilyCare's offices in Seymour.



*(left to right) Mitchell CEO Bill Braithwaite, FamilyCare CEO Angela Armstrong-Wright and Lower Hume Primary Care Partnership Executive Officer Tony Vivian signing the MOU in Council's Broadford offices.*

For further information please contact:  
Daniel Scoullar, Communications Coordinator, Mitchell  
Shire [communications@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au](mailto:communications@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au)

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

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

## NEWS

# NATIONAL REVIEW - DROUGHT POLICY

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## FROM THE EDITOR

*The ground cover is greener and the dam levels have risen slightly, yet the respite from our dry days are said to be short lived.*

*Keep up the good work. It is proving invaluable to maintain linkages into the varied communities within our region. This is certainly a time of change and our communities will continue to benefit from the networks that have been made via local government, agency staff and service providers.*

Regards,  
Toni Eames  
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Email: [toni.eames@dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:toni.eames@dpi.vic.gov.au)

## WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YOUR MUNICIPALITY?

## DO YOU HAVE A STORY YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE?

## DO YOU HAVE AN EVENT UPCOMING THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO PROMOTE?

**IF SO, SEND IT THROUGH TO ME AND IT COULD BE FRONT PAGE OF OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER!**

The Australian Government is conducting a comprehensive national review of drought policy through three separate assessments. The review will support the development of policies to help better prepare farmers and rural communities for a changing climate.

The review will include:

- an **economic** assessment of drought support measures by the Productivity Commission
- an assessment by an expert panel of the **social impacts** of drought on farm families and rural communities
- a **climatic** assessment by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and the Bureau of Meteorology of the likely future climate patterns and the current Exceptional Circumstances standard of a one-in-20-to-25-year-event.

The Federal Government Review of Drought Policy Expert Social Issues Panel is holding regional consultations. The Panel will be holding a forum in Shepparton on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2pm – 5pm at the Shepparton Club.

The Panel is focusing on the social impact of the drought and focuses on farm families, communities, health, education and employment, rather than the effectiveness of financial support. The Panel wants to know the issues, what has worked well and how existing policies or programs could be adjusted to address the impact more effectively.

The Panel wants to hear stories from individuals, groups and organisations to get a wide range of views from across the country. It would also like to receive any hard evidence to support your arguments and demonstrate its findings to the government.

The expert social panel has released an Issues Paper, and has called for written submissions. All affected and interested parties are strongly encouraged to make a written submission, as this process will be critical to the success of the expert social panel's assessment.

If you are unable to attend the forum, you can make a written submission to the Panel by Friday 8 August 2008.

For further details on the public forums and assistance with your submission, please telephone 1800 200 876 or visit <http://www.daff.gov.au/droughtpolicyreview>

## HEALTH AND WELLBEING

## MEDIA WATCH

# 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.

For more information please refer to their website <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au>

## 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](mailto:toni.eames@dpi.vic.gov.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](#)

## The Fast Break

A newsletter providing seasonal climate and risk information to the Victorian and Southern NSW cropping region.

The fast Break has received much acclaim and provides two pages of graphics and model summaries saving you hours of download time.

You will find the latest copy as an attachment to this newsletter.

If you would like to be added to the mailing list please contact Dale Grey [dale.grey@dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:dale.grey@dpi.vic.gov.au)

### Newsprint Stories

**THE AGE 28<sup>TH</sup> July** By: Philip Hopkins – **CONSORTIUM SEEKS TREE DEALS WITH FARMERS**

A consortium of private Victorian companies has launched an innovative program to grow long-term eucalypt plantations on private property. Led by Yarram company Radial Timber, the plan involves forming joint ventures with land owners probably farmers to use at least 50 hectares to grow the trees. Conditions will be set out in forest property agreements (FPAs).

[The Age – Consortium seeks tree deals with farmers](#)

**THE WEEKLY TIMES 2<sup>ND</sup> July** By: Kate Dowler and Leslie White – **DAIRY TO BE KING IN THE NEW FARM ORDER**

Pressure to increase scale to cope with declining terms of trade have driven major changes in the size of agricultural enterprises, across all commodities, since 2001. And dairy and cropping businesses are tipped to attract the greatest corporate interest in the coming years. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures for the five years to 2006, show the number of mixed cropping and dairy operations with a corporate structure and annual turnover of more than \$2 million increased by 147 per cent and 140 percent respectively.

[The Weekly Times – Dairy to be king in the new farm order](#)

**ABC Central Victoria – FARMERS WARNED OF SPRING LOCUST THREAT**

The Australian Plague Locust Commission says autumn survey results and landholder reports are indicating that large numbers of eggs are ready to hatch in northern and central Victoria and the New South Wales Riverina.

[ABC Central Victoria – farmers warned of spring locust threat](#)

### Media Releases

**6<sup>TH</sup> July – DROUGHTS TO BE MORE SEVERE AND OCCUR MORE OFTEN IN THE FUTURE**

Australia could experience drought twice as often and the events will be twice as severe within 20 to 30 years, according to a new Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO report.

[MAFF – Media Release](#)

## SUPPORT INITIATIVES

## 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.

## 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](#)

# A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE

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

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](#).

## KEY 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
<a href="#">Alpine Shire</a>	<a href="#">Jan Mock</a> , Community & Economic Recovery Officer	03 5755 0555
<a href="#">Benalla Rural City</a>	<a href="#">Kim Scanlon</a> , Drought Coordinator	03 5761 2247
<a href="#">City of Greater Shepparton</a>	<a href="#">Janet Congues</a> , Drought Recovery Officer	03 5832 9700
<a href="#">Indigo Shire</a>	<a href="#">Sally MCCarron</a> , Health & Wellbeing Manager	03 5728 8020
<a href="#">Mansfield Shire</a>	<a href="#">Kevin Murphy</a> , Senior Environmental Health Officer	03 5775 8544
<a href="#">Mitchell Shire</a>	<a href="#">Rob McVernon</a> , General Manager Community & Recreation	03 5734 6252
<a href="#">Moira Shire</a>	<a href="#">Sally Rice</a> , Community Development Officer <a href="#">Kaye Thomson</a> , Manager Community Development	03 5871 9222
<a href="#">Murrindindi Shire</a>	<a href="#">Tammy Fallon</a> , Executive Assistant	03 5786 1522
<a href="#">Rural City of Wangaratta</a>	<a href="#">Ann Heywood</a> , Executive Manager – Community & Social Planning	03 5722 0807
<a href="#">Strathbogie Shire</a>	<a href="#">Caroline Harlow</a> , Drought Coordinator	03 5795 0000
<a href="#">Towong Shire</a>	<a href="#">Gerard Van Emmerik</a> , Manager Community Services	02 6071 5100
<a href="#">City of Wodonga</a>	<a href="#">Debbie Mackinlay</a> , Recovery Manager	02 6022 9300

## KEY CONTACTS

**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

**GP Division contacts**

Area covered	GP Division	Contact
Moira (west end)	Murray Plains	Ruth Turpin 0412 966 778
Wodonga	Border	Mark Williams 02 60 491 900
Towong, Alpine, Wangaratta, Benalla, Mansfield, Strathbogie (east side), Murrindindi, Moira (east end)	North East	Les Hume 0448 885 853
Mitchell	Central Highlands	5428 4848
Shepparton Strathbogie (west side)	Goulburn Valley	5831 5399