



NSW DEPARTMENT OF  
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

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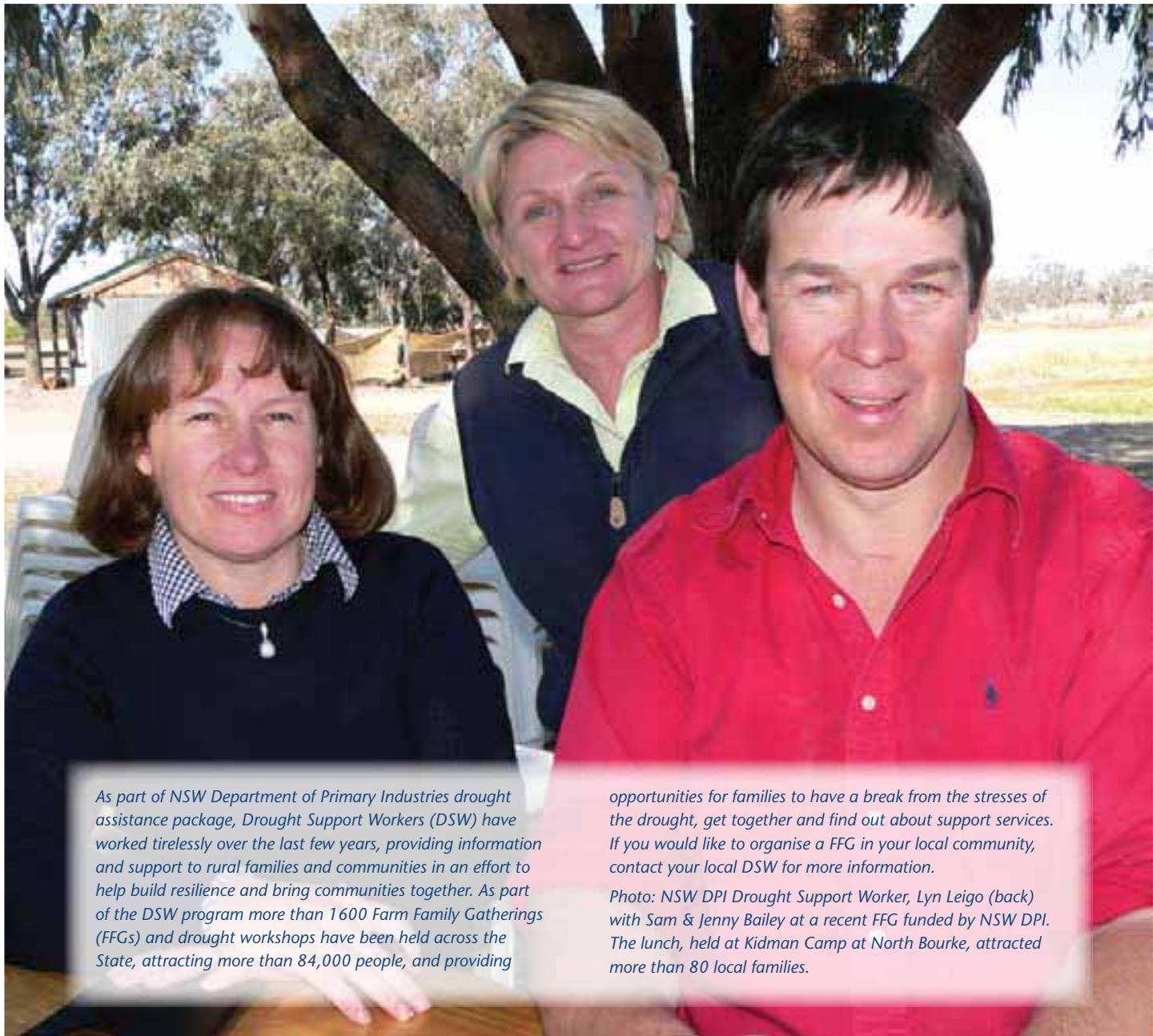
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# The Country Web

## RESILIENCE & RECOVERY

NUMBER 45 SUMMER 2007/8 FREE NEWSLETTER



As part of NSW Department of Primary Industries drought assistance package, Drought Support Workers (DSW) have worked tirelessly over the last few years, providing information and support to rural families and communities in an effort to help build resilience and bring communities together. As part of the DSW program more than 1600 Farm Family Gatherings (FFGs) and drought workshops have been held across the State, attracting more than 84,000 people, and providing

opportunities for families to have a break from the stresses of the drought, get together and find out about support services. If you would like to organise a FFG in your local community, contact your local DSW for more information.

Photo: NSW DPI Drought Support Worker, Lyn Leigo (back) with Sam & Jenny Bailey at a recent FFG funded by NSW DPI. The lunch, held at Kidman Camp at North Bourke, attracted more than 80 local families.



Let's make it happen – together

**Rural Women's Network**

MATE HELPING MATE ■ CITY-COUNTRY DIVIDE ■ TRIUMPH OVER ADVERSITY

## THE COUNTRY WEB

The Country Web is produced by NSW Department of Primary Industries Rural Women's Network (RWN) and is distributed free, three times a year. For more about RWN see page 5.

## EDITING/DESKTOP PUBLISHING

Allison Priest

## CONTRIBUTIONS

Letters, stories, poems and photographs from rural women and their families are always welcome.

## FREE MAILING LIST

If you live in New South Wales and would like to be on our free mailing list, contact the RWN.

## ADVERTISING

14,000 *Country Webs* are produced each edition. We welcome advertisements and offer very competitive rates. Contact RWN for more information. Sponsorship and insert options are also available.

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## COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS

See pages 7, 9, 23, 29 & 39 for competitions.

1. Information on how to enter and prize details form part of the Terms & Conditions. By entering the competition, entrants accept these Terms & Conditions.
2. To enter, you must provide your full name and postal details, and in 25 words or less answer the competition question.
3. Entries must be posted to the stated address by the stated date.
4. This competition is a game of skill. The best answer as judged by the RWN will win. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- Prizes cannot be transferred or redeemed for cash. The winner will be notified by mail within 14 days from the judging date.

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# contents

## FEATURES

### 6 Weaving strength & connections in the Lachlan

Lachlan Domestic Violence Groups in central NSW are using Indigenous weaving and basket making as a way of building support networks and passing on traditional skills to help combat violence in our families and communities.



### 8 Social networks: Re-kindling the old & creating the new

How do you go about engaging a community? What builds community resilience? A great example is the small town of Crookwell, who in response to the ongoing drought and declining social networks, developed a network of local coordinators to organise social events and look out for each other.

18

*Parenting Feature: Ideas and tips for young people to build their resilience*

### 10 Triumph over adversity

In her article, Anne Love, State NSW Good Grief State Coordinator, looks at why some people bounce back from adversity while others succumb to its power.



### 15 Mate Helping Mate

A self-help program to address depression in rural communities, this article looks at some basic principles for a successful Mate Helping Mate program. Why not get one up and running in your community.

26

*Out and about at the 2007 NSW Hay Women's Gathering.*

### 19 The city-country divide

A 4-page special pull-out section exploring issues around the city-country divide.

## REGULAR FEATURES

3 Editorial	23 Book reviews	34 SAC Update
3 Calendar	24 Grants/Funding	36 Web Watch
4 Letters	28 Health	37 What's on, What's new?
5 RWN Report	31 Women in Decision Making	38 Resources
18 Parenting		

# editorial

Resilience is being able to recover from, or adjust, to misfortune or change. Being resilient enables us to be positive and move forward in life rather than getting stuck in fear and negativity. It is the ability to experience disappointment, rejection, loss and failure, to accept the situation (even when we don't like it) and move beyond it.

Being resilient can be a decision – the choice you make about how to deal with a challenging situation. Simply making the decision that everything is going to work out and believing this can enable people to recover from some of life's greatest challenges, including illness, injury, financial hardship and loss.

The best way to develop our resilience is by dealing with adversity or change. Life brings all of us challenges and obstacles. The way we choose to cope with these challenging times helps to make us who we are and the experience gives us the opportunity to build our resilience. When those testing times come your way you have a choice, you can let them overwhelm you into inaction or you can work your way through the situation and decide that something good will come of it.

The drought conditions that we have been experiencing for several years are creating enormous pressures and are forcing changes in rural Australia. Some

farming families are juggling family commitments, farm work and off-farm work in order to survive. Some farmers are making the difficult decision to leave their farm. Other farmers are making changes to their farm management strategies and are learning from the drought so they are better able to cope with the present situation and be better prepared for climatic variation in the future. All are experiencing opportunities to build their resilience.

Some ways to help with drought recovery and resilience at this challenging time include taking time out, even if this is just finding some time for yourself each week to do something you enjoy. Living in a supportive community can help build your resilience as well, so try and make time to socialise and talk to your neighbours – it can be helpful to know that you are not alone. I know of a group of neighbouring farmers who decided to meet once every couple of weeks for dinner to help them support each other during the drought. Community groups have organised Farm Family Gatherings (FFGs) to encourage farmers to take time out, have some fun and chat to their neighbours. Glenda McCue's story on pages 8-9 about the Crookwell women is another great example of a community

coming together and supporting one another.

Asking for help and accessing support can also help improve your recovery and resilience. I encourage people not to be too proud to apply for government assistance if their financial situation is strained, or to seek professional help if your physical or emotional health are suffering. Being in denial about financial or health related problems does not make you resilient, it only makes these problems worse. It is best to acknowledge the problem, face up to it and make the changes necessary to overcome it.

This edition of the *Web* encourages us to share our thoughts, experiences and ideas on recovery and resilience so we can learn from each other and hopefully be inspired to choose to be resilient in the face of adversity or change in the future.



**Kim Deans, Rural Financial Counsellor – NSW Northern Region & Member, RWN State Advisory Committee**

RWN Assistant Coordinator, Allison Priest, is taking 12 months maternity in 2008. We wish her all the best for this new chapter in her life and look forward to her return in 2009.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### FEBRUARY 2008

**TBA, SYDNEY**  
**2008 RIRDC Rural Women's Award Gala Celebratory Dinner**  
The 2008 Award celebrates and recognises the vital contribution women make to rural Australia. Keep checking the RWN website for details on our 2008 finalists and Gala Dinner coming soon.

### MARCH 2008

**12-13, TAMWORTH**  
**Shaping Our Futures Together**  
A 2-day workshop for NSW DPI participants. Contact RWN on Ph: 02 6391 3611 or Email: sonia.muir@dpi.nsw.gov.au

### 8, INTERNATIONAL

**2008 International Women's Day**  
This year's theme, '100 years of active women in paid and unpaid work', recognises the countless contributions that women in NSW have made towards improving workplaces and working conditions, as well as their tireless volunteering work which has contributed to the growth of more vibrant communities. The Office for Women has provided grants to many councils across the State so don't forget to find out what's happening in your area. If you're organising an event contact RWN to have the details added to our website calendar.

### 26-27, ENGONNIA

**Shaping Our Futures Together**  
A 2-day workshop to assist women living in rural communities to develop their leadership and networking skills. Contact RWN on Ph: 02 6391 3611 or Email: sonia.muir@dpi.nsw.gov.au

### APRIL 2008

**4-6, NARROMINE**  
**NSW Women in Agriculture Inc. Annual Conference – Blooming Out West**  
Contact Lynne Jones on Ph: 02 6973 9409 or Email: oaklands@ceinternet.com.au

### WHAT'S NEXT?

*The theme for next edition of The Country Web is 'At the Crossroads'.*

*If you have stories, poems, pictures or information of interest, we would love to hear from you.*

*Contributions required by 15 February 2008 for publication in April 2008.*

*Send your stories to: The Editor, RWN, Locked Bag 21, Orange NSW 2800, Fax: 02 6391 3650; or Email: allison.priest@dpi.nsw.gov.au*

## Stamina and survival

Maybe you read David Hill's book about Fairbridge Farm, describing children's lives in these types of institutions, and wonder how some of us overcame the problems of our childhood and others of us floundered for the rest of our unhappy lives.

Looking at famous survivalists, can we find a common quality to explain their heroic efforts? The yachtsman under his upturned boat in the middle of an ocean, Stewart Diver under tons of shifting masonry, the two Tasmanian miners trapped in an unimaginable situation, the young girl who swam ashore after a shark bit off her arm or the mountaineer on his own, trapped by his arm between two enormous rocks who, after giving up hope of being rescued after three days, cut off his arm with a penknife then staggered to safety.

The mind boggles at the strength and determination that all these people showed, but probably more able to show the difference is when the same situation involves different types of people, as in a war. Under heavy fire, some soldiers curled up and just hid their heads in their arms, frozen with terror while others moved ahead, picked up fallen mates and carried them back to relative safety. What made the difference? Resilience, stamina, faith, courage?

If we drop a ball that is half flat it will hardly bounce at all, but if it is full of air it will rebound strongly. Could this be the difference between attitudes of people in trouble? Not that we want to be full of air, but maybe it is self-worth, confidence or just ego that makes the difference.

Being tested with small problems when we are younger builds up our strength to handle bigger problems as we get older. Unfortunately though, some children are tested too hard,

too soon and their confidence is shattered, their self-worth squashed and their damaged ego's scarred for life – our jails are full of them and so are our cemeteries.

So what is the answer? Is it money? No. Only caring and understanding can cure the cancer of neglect, whether young or old, white or brindle, the answer is the same. So what can we do as individuals? Do not look at the outer shell; find out what is inside waiting to come out and be healed, then help with the healing.

**Mavis Appleyard, Warren**

## The invisible woman

A woman's work around the farm or house is often taken for granted, and sometimes her presence is only noticed by her absence. She spends little time on herself, either because she doesn't have the time or the resources to do so.

So, as a special treat for 22 ladies in our shire seriously affected by the drought, they were given the 'treatment'. They each received two complimentary beauty services (either a foot massage, manicure, facial or haircut and style) by local professionals as part of a special day organised by the Country Women's Association (CWA) Southern Tablelands Group with support from NSW Department of Primary Industries.

This wonderful afternoon was organised by Lillian Marshall from the Crookwell CWA Branch who does a wonderful and never-ending job as our Handicraft Officer and Vice President. Local businesses and groups generously donated goods for the day which were beautifully wrapped and presented to each of the 22 ladies along with a beautiful rose.

Entertainment on the day was provided by local identity, Peter Ragget and his talented wife Sandra who sang some Opera

style songs to the enjoyment of all. And a delicious afternoon tea was served by members of the Crookwell CWA.

In all, it was a wonderful afternoon thoroughly enjoyed by all the ladies who expressed their heartfelt thanks on the day with follow-up phone calls.

**Gai Goesch, Crookwell**

## 2007 Women's Gathering

Myself and Christina Green were keynote speakers at the NSW Women's Gathering in Hay.

We were deeply touched by the sincerity and generosity of all the women who attended this event and are particularly appreciative of the wonderful community at Hay and the extraordinary efforts of the Women About Hay in hosting this event.

We were given the opportunity to meet so many wonderful women from all over NSW, many of who are experiencing very difficult times, yet whose spirit and joy for life keeps their communities alive.

Christina and I run a support group for former inmates of the Parramatta Girls Home – parragirls – and many of our members live in rural and regional areas. We will be encouraging them to look up *The Country Web* and to request to be put on your mailing list.

**Bonney Djuric, Sydney**

*ED: In 2006 Bonney and Christina founded the Parramatta Female Factory Precinct Association (PFFPA) in an effort to promote and conserve this earliest major site of female convict settlement and to seek its memorialisation as Australia's first National Women's Heritage Centre. Bonney and Christina are currently spearheading a campaign to generate interest and support for this ambitious project and are asking for your support. For more information go to: [www.pffp.org.au](http://www.pffp.org.au), Email: [info@parragirls.org.au](mailto:info@parragirls.org.au) or call Bonney on 0437 221 149.*

## A note of thanks

I really enjoyed the recent Women's Gathering in Hay. It is not until you get away that you realise how important the break is and what stress we are under. The time out and interacting with so many others in our situation makes us realise we are not alone in this drought – it is so wide spread. The workshop and speakers were great and I met lots of new people. Thank you for providing this wonderful opportunity.

**Sondra Lehane, Bribbaree**

## A sense of healing

The flow on from the Hay Women's Gathering has been fantastic. I was at a Community Justice Meeting last week, and had 8-10 indigenous women come up and talk to me about coming next year to Coonamble! There's been a great sense of 'healing' for the women who went to Hay, (all had been through institutions). Again thank you to everyone for making our journey from Kempsey to Hay possible. Our lives and many others in our community are richer for the experience as the women came home feeling stronger, happier, healthier and brimming with ideas!

**Maura Luxford, Kempsey**

## COMPETITION WINNERS: THE COUNTRY WEB NO.44

**MotherWho? Stories & Insights on Juggling Family, Work & Life:** T Hillier, Wagga Wagga; M Hollingworth, Deepwater; J Magner, Tenterfield; and J Roughley, Bourke.

**Bessie Jennings: 19 Original Bush Poems:** J Magner, Tenterfield.

# from Sonia's desk



The RWN team: Di Williams (A/Project Officer), Sonia Muir (Coordinator), and Allison Priest (Assistant Coordinator)

The Rural Women's Network (RWN) is a statewide government program within NSW Department of Primary Industries and is based at Orange. RWN works in partnership with individuals and agencies to share information and promote action on rural women's issues. The RWN:

- provides information and referrals;
- supports the development of local initiatives;
- works with rural women and families to identify and bring attention to priority issues;
- develops projects with other agencies to address needs;
- provides a medium for networking and information sharing;
- promotes the profile of rural women;
- provides a two-way link between government and rural women; and
- provides policy advice.

Contact the RWN on  
Ph: 02 6391 3620 or Email:  
[rural.women@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:rural.women@dpi.nsw.gov.au)

Learning to be more resilient and recover after challenges often seems impossible but is essential if we want to pursue a happy life. Sometimes we just need to be reminded that regularly focusing on ourselves can build our strength to cope with whatever life dishes up.

An easy place to start is to set one or two small achievable and enjoyable goals. Perhaps it could be as simple as giving yourself permission to start work a little later or finish early one day a week to schedule time for yourself (even 10 or 20 minutes can make a difference and start a good habit).

You may like to indulge by having a massage or a long coffee with a sliver of cake and a magazine. Perhaps watch a funny video before everyone comes home. Do something silly like sing loud or dance vigorously to a favourite tune. Or just sit and 'be' or truly listen to the words of a song.

It doesn't really matter what you do as long as you do something you enjoy and challenge yourself NOT to feel guilty! You are important and you deserve to treat yourself now and again. It may in fact be the most important gift you can give yourself.

The first step is to decide up front what you want to do and make a commitment by writing it down somewhere you will see it everyday. It can also help to tell others and ask for their support. After a month, review how you went. Writing can really help this

process. 'Was it difficult?' or 'How do I feel having actually focused on myself?' It is really important to make even a small positive change.

Women who attended the 2007 Women's Gathering at Hay, will know what a fabulous opportunity this was to recharge the batteries and build resilience, especially with this ongoing drought. The next Gathering will be held in Coonamble on 17-19 October 2008 so mark your diaries now!

The RWN Shaping Our Futures Together (SOFT) course also builds resilience by taking participants on a two-day journey exploring where they are now and setting goals to move forward. Activities are used to unlock creative thinking and review obstacles that may be hindering women from achieving personal happiness. It is about women finding their own inner resilience to tackle whatever they wish and embark on a path of recovery or discovery.

SOFT courses help you to take those first steps and are suitable for all women

regardless of background, race or age. Over the past few months we have delivered courses in Goodooga, Bourke, Corowa and Narrabri. The groups included Aboriginal women, farming women, town women and those with and without children.

If you would like to have a SOFT in your area during 2008 please contact us to see what might be possible. (See page 3 for 2008 courses).

Over the past few months I have interviewed a range of inspiring women for RWN's Daring to Dream project, including, a grassroots lobbyist, an organic farmer, a milliner, and an artist. The project celebrates and recognises women who are playing key roles as achievers and agents of change. I am always looking for more stories and would love to hear from you.

I wish you all a safe summer and look forward to our paths crossing in 2008.

RWN COORDINATOR



Some of the women from the Goodooga SOFT Workshop

Visit the Rural Women's Network internet site at  
[www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/rwn](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/rwn)

Rural Women's Network

# Weaving strength & connections

Article by Liz MacRaid, Department of Community Services, Orange



Condobolin weavers, Karen Dunn and Bev Coe at the opening of Twined Together, an exhibition of fibre work of the Gunbalanya women of Western Arnhem Land at Bathurst Art Gallery, September 2007



Bonnie Johnson, Reg Saddler, Bev Coe & Zanette Coe promote local weaving workshops in the main street of Lake Cargelligo.

*Preventing violence in families and communities is a bit about people feeling connected to their community and culture, feeling worthwhile and having services and networks they can get support from. Lachlan Domestic Violence Groups in central NSW are using Indigenous weaving and basket making as a way of building some of these networks and support, and passing on traditional skills that could build a craft industry.*

Wiradjuri women, Bev Coe, Condobolin weaver and artist, and Su Williams, Aboriginal Community Support Officer with Central West Catchment Management Authority, have been passing on their skills around use and protection of different plant fibres and their habitats.

Weaving is a relaxing activity where, with a little practice, bumbling fingers soon become rhythmic. The first creation might be wonky but the second is better. Su's way of working supports key people to teach others in culturally appropriate ways. It affirms existing skills, builds confidence and a sense of common interest and purpose. Sitting around provides a safe and open setting where people can tell their stories and talk about their lives and hopes.

Su learnt from several people about weaving native fibres, including Masters in the field, Ellen Trevor from Coorong in South Australia and Mrs Mackay from Bourke. The baskets are made from spiny sedge (*Cyperus gymnocaulos*), a plant that grows well around the edge of Lake Cargelligo. Bev also makes baskets using natural raffia and cumbungi or bulrush gathered by the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) team in Condobolin. Dyes have also been tried

using quandong, gum leaves, tea and walnut skins.

With driver and weaving partner Karen Dunn, Bev has run workshops in Orange and Parkes, where weavers are passing on skills to school groups and other women. A highlight has been a trip to Camp Coorong in Ngarrindjeri country in South Australia. Links across the other areas are being strengthened with a visit planned in early 2008 to Boolarng Nangamai art and culture studio in Gerringong on the southern NSW coast.

Heather Blackley from Western Plains Regional Development in Condobolin remarked there is so much that is exciting about this project. It really is collaborative, linking many different groups in the community who have an interest – from the arts and heritage, to land management and habitat protection, to tourism and economic development, education and training. And the outcomes? We see excitement and enthusiasm, growing confidence, laughing, story-telling, new connections, a willingness to pass skills onto others, respect between learners, pride in what is created – and lots of potential for more.

West Women Weaving builds on a series of earlier arts and community

education projects supported by workers from Central West Family Support, the Communities Division of the Department of Community Services and Yoorana Gunya Family Violence Healing Centre. The project is supported with funding from the Australian Government Regional Arts Fund, and Indigenous Coordination Centre through Department of Communications, Information, Technology and the Arts. ■

## RESILIENCE

What a great word is resilience  
For it indicates such strength  
In moments of adversity  
We can go to any length  
It means snapping back from problems  
Coping well with seasonal change  
Getting through floods in winter  
After the deluge of sudden rains  
Throughout a long hard summer  
Of dust bowls and stark terrains  
Come springs wondrous donation  
Of blossom, though morning chills remain  
Resilience is a state of mind  
A chance to conquer all  
Disregarding all things negative  
By standing strong and tall.

© JEAN OPPERMAN, PASCOE VALE

# Understanding feelings

Adapted from 'Bouncing Back from Life's Knock' article by Petrea King, Bundanoon

The future for rural communities will always be full of uncertainty; indeed the only certainty for us all is change. Overcoming a challenge in one part of life can enhance overall resilience and the ability to cope and manage. However, prolonged and overwhelming stress can leave us bereft of meaning and purpose and trigger a crisis of identity and capability. It can strain or break relationships that were once the foundation of our lives and cause us to withdraw, isolate and be consumed by despair. It is important to maintain humour, self-respect, courage and build resilience and a capacity to bounce back from life's knocks.

It isn't always easy to change how we see things. We can sometimes feel trapped by our perceptions of what is happening and believe there is no way out. We need to listen to our feelings as these are messages from a deeper place within us. We often 'don't go there' because we are afraid it will re-open old wounds we'd rather keep in the background. But, if we can start to explore these feelings we can begin to heal, let go of fear and build resilience.

When we're dealing with grief, despair, trauma or tragedy, we're very likely to also be confronted with other unresolved issues. This can take people completely by surprise. They wonder why they're pre-occupied with past traumas in addition to the present one.

It is common for people to resist letting their tears fall and yet this is the body's natural release of stored emotion. The endorphins in our tears give us a sense of relaxation and relief. They are the body's own pain relievers and contain potent chemicals that soothe us physically, mentally and emotionally.

Expressing our feelings in a safe supportive environment allows us to integrate challenging experiences into our life and build resilience. More and more people are using drugs, alcohol or prescribed medication to quell their anxieties simply because they are afraid or don't know any better way. This can lead to a destructive path.

We are not our feelings; we have feelings. We live in a culture that often places little value on exploring our feelings and relegates them to safe expression through art, music, theatre or other creative media.

Reaching out to others is often very unfamiliar. We may not even have the words to express what we feel or know what we need. For anyone growing up in a home where feelings were not even named let alone dealt with, voicing inner thoughts with friends and loved ones may be quite scary so it is often easier to air one's thoughts and feelings with a complete stranger who will have no emotional involvement with us. We may have been taught that some feelings are 'good' and some are 'bad'. We may have learned to suppress or repress feelings that might be unpredictable, irrational, outrageous or inappropriate – even from ourselves. Comments like, 'you shouldn't feel like that', 'there's no reason to feel that way', 'don't get so excited' and 'big girls/boys don't cry' may have become ingrained from childhood.

Anger is not a 'bad' emotion. Healthily expressed anger is the discharge of disharmony within our selves. An unhealthy or inappropriate expression of anger is when we use anger to wound other people or ourselves. Wherever there is anger – in our selves, in others or in our community we need to realise it could be a call for help rather than an attack.

There are basically three ways of dealing with our feelings. Firstly we can just deny they exist. This takes a lot of energy to keep them from ourselves or other people and doesn't help in the long run.

Secondly we can indulge our feelings and immerse ourselves in them. These people either splatter their emotions around freely perhaps with the excuse; 'It's just the way I am!' or they often implode becoming moody, sulky and emotionally unavailable to other people.

The best way to deal with our feelings is to consciously acknowledge them and choose to

let them go or give them expression in a way that doesn't wound others or ourselves. This often requires understanding and assistance as it may be a very new way of dealing with what is unfamiliar.

People often unconsciously seek 'intimacy-amongst-strangers' despite having many friends. The company of others such as support groups who understand how despair, grief or feeling trapped actually feels can be very healing and therapeutic. Reaching out to other people is often a very challenging thing to do. However, when we have the courage to utter what may have been unutterable we immediately start to heal.

Through the practice of awareness we can increase our capacity to experience our feelings and control our response rather than simply reacting. This applies to the little irritations as well as more serious life issues.

The need for emotional healing becomes more urgent when we're confronted by challenges and difficulties beyond our control. There are endless situations we can't control such as the weather or the way other people behave. We need to recognise that this can cause stress if we let it. Experience is not what happens to us. It is what we do with what happens to us.

We don't need to change our selves, change others or change the world just simply change our perceptions of our selves, others and the world. Obviously this is not as easy as it sounds but our willingness to embrace these challenges and not just 'soldier on' can begin the positive process of building self-esteem and resilience.

For information on Petrea King's Quest for Life Centre and programs go to:  
[www.questforlife.com.au](http://www.questforlife.com.au)



## RELAXATION PACK

*The Country Web* is giving you the chance to win a relaxation pack courtesy of the Quest for Life Centre. The pack is ideal for people needing to de-stress and find some meaning in their busy lives and includes: a copy of *Your Life Matters* by Petrea King, a Relaxation CD, handmade lavender incense and a brass inlaid ash burner. To be in the running, tell us in 25 words or less your tips for dealing with change. Entries must be received by 22 January 2008. Send your entry to: *The Country Web*, Locked Bag 21, Orange NSW 2800. See page 2 for terms & conditions.

# Social networks: re-kindling the old and creating the new

By Glenda McCue, Crookwell



**How do you go about engaging a community? What builds community resilience? A great example is the small town of Crookwell who, in response to the ongoing drought and declining social networks, developed a network of local coordinators to organise social events and look out for each other.**

Glenda McCue lives with her husband John and their two young children on the family farm 'Woolomin' near Crookwell in the Southern Tablelands. In addition to running the farm Glenda and John both work off-farm with Glenda running an online contracting service marketing pharmaceutical products.

Born and raised in the district, Glenda left Crookwell for 20 years, training as a nurse and working in the pharmaceutical industry before returning in 2002 after buying her parents 323 ha farm business that is located high on the Great Dividing Range between Gunning and Crookwell.

Glenda is heavily involved in her local community as one of 21 Network Coordinators who organise mates nights and other social events as a way of bringing the community together in the face of the current drought.

Since their first social gathering the group has held many successful events and is a great example of what small communities can do to pull together and support one another in tough times.



It's times like drought that those clichés your mother taught you come to light – things can't get any worse; things can only get better; you're damned if you do and damned if you don't; there is always someone worse off than me; in every bad there is good etc.

I guess in reality it is these turns of phrase that are the basis of why we continue to live and work on the land. The thing that bonds us as small communities is the fact that we are all living the truth of drought day-by-day. The thing that sets our local community in Crookwell apart from other communities is the desire and willingness to

socialise to help 'cope' with what has happened and continues to happen on the land.

Social networks were very much alive and well when we were children. One vivid memory is of the circuit of wool shed dances. The piano accordion and drums parked in the corner of the wool shed providing the tempo as people circled around on the 'pops'. These social networks often still exist, but just need the action of a few motivated people to re-kindle the spirit.

At Crookwell, we have an informal group of people who are interested in 'looking after your mates'. A group of 18 women (and 3 men) meet approximately every eight weeks to share the experience of organising social opportunities for our local people. Each volunteer is responsible for looking after their mates in their local district which makes up

the Upper Lachlan Shire. NSW Department of Primary Industries assists with sponsorship of local events led by our local Drought Support Worker, Dick Kearins. Social events include a BBQ under an oak tree on one of the local properties or within a local community hall; a band and children's activities (jumping castles and face painting) at local bush pubs and clubs; or a bush dance – whatever it takes to get people together easily, and with relatively little expense.

We have also experienced the warmth and generosity of associations, church groups and clubs from NSW and the ACT who have donated many gifts of clothing and food hampers for our local residents. It is amazing how a bag of groceries can bring a smile to the face of isolated people – glad to see you and you knowing that you have a good excuse to call on them. The elderly are particularly at risk