

Simple first steps... to managing change

INTRODUCTION

Change is ongoing and will keep happening throughout your life so you have to learn to deal with it.

Change may be both positive and negative; under your control or out of your control. Examples include new government legislation, staying or moving to another area, leaving the farm or changing enterprises, getting married or living together, reviving or leaving a relationship, changing career paths, having a child. It all boils down to choosing a way forward.

It is natural for you to feel uncomfortable at times of uncertainty when you face a crossroad and tough decisions have to be made.

When we are threatened by changes, we often look for someone or something to blame, particularly if the causes of our circumstances are imposed on us. It is important you accept when factors causing change are beyond your control, and move on.

It is also easy to fall into the trap of self-blame or focus your anger on the actions of others, but if you want to move forward and successfully take control, you must learn to manage change and make decisions or the change will manage you, or worse still others will make decisions for you. Isolation, secrecy and fear of being judged can be major barriers to making these decisions or seeking help.

Initially you have two choices in managing change: either you act, or you don't act.

Doing something may be difficult, but think – what would happen if you did nothing?

By clarifying the issues, talking it through with those affected by the change and seeking help will give you a clearer picture of the options available. Remember that generally change is easier to manage if there are supportive relationships with everyone involved.

HOW TO TAKE THE FIRST STEPS

Here are some ideas to get you started on the decision-making process. When you have ticked all the boxes you are well on your way to managing change!

- ✓ Have you focused on what you can change?
- ✓ Have you got as much information as you can to create a clear picture of what the issues are and who is involved?
- ✓ Have you discussed the issues with everyone involved (your partner, your family—including the children, trusted friends or professionals) to find out what they think or how they feel?

- ✓ Have you taken on board their comments and established some options?
- ✓ Have you considered the financial health, environmental, personal, family, relationship and happiness aspects of these options?
- ✓ Have you discussed these options with everyone involved, and agreed on some to explore further?
- ✓ Have you sought out those who have professional expertise in the various aspects of the options you are considering?
- ✓ Have you developed a final option and presented it to everyone involved and listed any 'for and against' issues surrounding the decision? (Have a small celebration planned for the end of such discussions, such as going out for a family dinner.)
- ✓ Have you developed a clear decision which everyone understands and agrees to follow through? (If not, are you prepared to carry the burden alone and have you thought about the consequences of this?)

SOME HELPFUL RESOURCES

RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLORS (RFCs)

Assist farmers and small rural businesses seeking confidential, free, independent financial advice and information. They can help with government and non-government assistance schemes and referrals to other services. RFCs are found across NSW. To locate a Rural Financial Counsellor nearest you, **Ph: 1800 686 175**, www.affa.gov.au/financialcounselling

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT FISHERS AND FARMERS ASSISTANCE LINE provides advice on a range of programs and services offered by Centrelink. **Ph: 1800 050 585**

COUNTRY CARE LINK is a confidential information and support service for country NSW providing legal assistance and personal counselling. For country people travelling to Sydney, Country Care Link can also arrange a volunteer to meet them and provide transport, make hospital visits and help find short-term accommodation. **Ph: 1800 806 160**, Monday to Friday 9.00 am to 4.30 pm.

LIFELINE provides a free 24 hour confidential telephone counselling service 7 days a week. **Ph: 13 11 14**.

CHALLENGE OF CHANGE is a one hour DVD/video resource for rural families in business, providing information and strategies to help manage change successfully. **Ph: 07 4159 6240**, www.highresolutions.com.au

The **RURAL WOMEN'S NETWORK** is a program within NSW Department of Primary Industries. It can help with referrals to appropriate services and information. It also runs a two-day course for rural women called Shaping Our Futures Together (SOFT), which focuses on building self-esteem and confidence, goal setting and networking. **Ph: 02 6391 3620**, www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/rwn



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