



Rural Support Program

Progress Report 2012 - 2013



Department of
Primary Industries

Our vision

Resilient rural communities engaged in social and economic capacity building

Our mission

To build the capacity and resilience of rural communities through improved knowledge, skills and practices to enable better management of future environmental and other adverse events.



Cover: NSW farmer and Livestock Manager at Orange Agricultural Institute Rob Dunkley with Rural Support Program leader Cheryl Pope, and Jack

Above: Damage caused by the Mulwala tornado

Top left: Student Debbie Cole (L) and Jamy Somerville working with the Rural Support Program

Top right: Bushfires ravaged Warrumbungle National Park

Our role

The Rural Support Program collaborates with existing Department of Primary Industries (DPI) programs, community and service providers to help build the capacity and resilience of people in rural New South Wales (NSW) so that they are better equipped to meet the range of challenges they face.

One of the program's focal areas is adaptation to climate variability. We help farm families, farm business and rural communities develop skills that will assist them to adapt to a changing climate and manage the impact of climate variability on their economic security and personal wellbeing.

We also assist communities to prepare for and manage environmental events including floods, bushfires and droughts. During and after such events, the team provides personal support, delivers basic information and provides referral to other appropriate services.

To deliver our services, the Rural Support Program works with a diverse range of partners. These include the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services and other State Government agencies; Rural Adversity Mental Health Program; the Rural Financial Counselling Service; the Regional Assistance Advisory Committee (RAAC); local governments; and non-government health-based and community organisations. We also have partners in the education sector including TAFE colleges and Macquarie and Newcastle universities.

By sharing our networks, the program creates access to information and services that may elude some rural communities.

As part of the DPI, the Rural Support Program has a role in facilitating competitive, safe, healthy, and biosecure primary industries. We aim for excellence in client services and delivery. We also contribute to the State Government's goals and this expands our role to include activities that enhance the performance of the NSW economy, regional growth, and assistance with the preparation for and recovery from major emergencies.

Rural Support Workers

Rural Support Workers implement the Rural Support Program on behalf of the DPI. The team live and work within rural communities.

During the recovery phase following a natural disaster, when there is high demand for services in local areas, we have been able to use the Natural Disaster Arrangements to engage local people to bolster community capacity and work with the community in a strength-based approach.

Figure 1. Rural Support Workers team



Cheryl Pope Leader
Orange



Rebecca Dridan
Gunnedah



Danny Byrnes
Hay



Jen Haberecht
Grafton



Dick Kearins
Goulburn



Di Pritchard
Albury

"We aim to support NSW rural communities in building the skills and networks they need to deal with the challenges they face - now and in the future"

Rural Support Worker

Executive Summary

Our vision is to have resilient rural communities across NSW, driving social and economic change.

With this goal in mind, over the past year, we have worked with our partner organisations on a variety of programs. Together we have delivered services to build community capacity, assisted communities to prepare for and manage adverse and emergency events, and helped to raise awareness of the drivers of good health and wellbeing in communities. Perhaps most importantly of all, we worked with communities to achieve goals that are important to them.

Over the past year, we have led more than 100 workshops on topics including men's health, succession planning and farm finance; and conducted training sessions on strategic planning, governance and grant writing. We worked with nearly 9000 people from a range of rural communities before, during and after natural disasters. We are pleased to have provided individual support to around 1342 primary producers facing adversity.

Our work allowed us to contribute to important policy development and legislation reform around drought during the year.

To expand our horizons we have participated in many forums, partnered with organisations and built our own capacity and knowledge. In 2013 the Rural Support Program teamed with Macquarie University's Participation and Community Engagement (PACE) program,

hosting a student to develop important resources for our team.

Last year we developed a monitoring and evaluation framework. This year we have taken time to develop a strategy to guide our communications with partners and stakeholders. The strategic goal for the program's communications is that "Key stakeholders understand who we are and what we do, so that they recognise the value of the Rural Support Program and support our work".

Over the past summer, NSW suffered a series of severe bushfires and floods, and a devastating tornado. The Rural Support Program provided a strong local link to the people and networks of disaster-affected communities and worked closely with DPI's Biosecurity Branch during the preparedness and recovery phases of these disasters.

Right: Woodburn Men's Health Workshop
Below: Coonabarabran – Rural Support Program supported bushfire recovery



Just a quick note to congratulate you both on yesterday's conference. It was well organised (tick). It was relevant (tick). It was timely (tick). And you had people there that made contributions that were a revelation.

*Participant,
Working Together
to Deal with Natural
Disaster Conference*

Figure 2. Alignment between State Government goals, the Department of Primary Industries' key result areas and the Rural Support Program's Planned outcomes

NSW 2021	DPI Key Results Areas	Rural Support Program strategic plan
Goal 1 Performance of NSW economy Goal 3 Regional growth Goal 28 Managing major emergencies Goal 31 Improve access to government info Goal 32 Community involvement in decision making	1. Competitive primary industries 3. Safe, healthy, and biosecure primary industries 4. Excellence in client services and delivery	Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productivity in primary industry increases • Incidents and emergencies are effectively planned for and managed • Our services meet client and community needs • Community confidence in our services is increased • Enhanced opportunities for communities to participate in decision making

This year we contributed to a successful grant application which provided funding to DPI's Biosecurity Branch to develop a community engagement plan for the Agriculture and Animal Services Functional Area, linked to the NSW State Disaster Plan. This will support our work in building resilience and capacity in rural and regional communities.

Our practical work is underpinned by theoretical models, such as a resilience framework and systems theory, that help us to understand communities and their adaptive capacity and to support the development of resilience. We focus on public participation (values-based, objectives-driven and decision-oriented), appreciative inquiry, assets-based community development, and capacity building.

Continued evaluation of our work and knowledge of issues that arise in rural communities assist us to better focus our activities and provide quality information to policy makers. In the coming year, we will implement a social science research plan which includes collecting and reporting evidence from our interventions to support and build our knowledge of effective community engagement.

DPI, and our group in turn, has seen considerable change over the last year. We would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our team of Rural Support Workers during this time as well as former team members Pip Brown, Jan Bruce, Jenny Croft, Caroline Long and Lee Spinks who have made significant contributions to the achievements of the program.

Goal 1

To increase the capacity and adaptability of farmers and their communities to meet a range of economic, social and environmental challenges

Building community capacity

Natural disasters, demographic changes and variations in climate can damage the social fabric of rural communities. Increasing community capacity and resilience helps communities to maintain energy and wellbeing, cope more effectively with difficult situations and recover more quickly from events which impact them.

Our capacity building activity is broadly based around three types of actions: developing skills, developing structures and developing support. The Rural Support Program works with local partners to deliver training. We link people to one another; to networks and to opportunities. We facilitate access to support services and to information.

Supporting individual communities

The Rural Support Program provides support to individual communities where a need is identified and particularly in times of stress following a natural disaster.

During the year, the Rural Support Program:

- provided community support at a personal level when it joined forces with the Quest for Life Foundation to host "Bounceback" workshops in Moree, Inverell and Rowena in July 2012. More than 60 people attended the workshops, which were designed to assist

community members to build their resilience following floods and other difficulties. Attendees were offered practical solutions to help individuals and the community through difficult circumstances.

- worked in partnership with the Kempsey Shire Council through the recent floods to build capacity in the affected community. We provided training in 'working with difficult emotions' for people in the service sector to assist them to respond effectively to those experiencing difficult emotions after the floods.
- supported community-driven initiatives such as the Community Well Being Centre in Henty, the Community Gymnasium in Lockhart, and the Community Garden project in Corowa, supporting the creation of Men's Sheds in Culcairn and The Rock, as well as assisting with strategic planning, with grant writing, events and promotion.

Social wellbeing

In difficult times, people often withdraw socially which reduces the community's capacity overall. The Rural Support Program recognises the critical part social wellbeing plays in a community's ability to look after itself. We support a range of activities that help to re-establish social connectedness.

The project has given me an opportunity to contribute to the Rural Support Workers and rural communities which has been really satisfying - Debbie Cole (below).



Below: Attendees at the National Rural Women's Conference.



Thank you so much for your wonderful support and assistance in making possible our Year of the Farmer Bushdance.

Our small rural community came together for a most enjoyable and fun night, and we thank you and the NSW DPI for making it possible.

**Narelle Gault,
Quandialla**

During the year, the program has encouraged the formation of "coffee clubs". These provide space for people to meet, gain mutual support and take ownership of local issues. Coffee clubs have now started in Bemboka, Gunning and Bookham with about 55 people actively engaged. They are an important mechanism for discussing issues and deciding community priorities.

2012 was the Year of the Farmer which provided an opportunity to celebrate farmers' enormous contribution to Australian life. There were many local initiatives and the Rural Support Program was delighted to support a bush dance at Quandialla in central western NSW in August. The dance was organised to give people a chance to come together, catch up and celebrate farming.

Developing leadership capacity

The Rural Support Program recognises that having strong and skilled community leaders goes a long way to ensuring resilience. We promote leadership development in a variety of ways including sponsoring conference attendance, facilitating access to online learning, and hosting workshops in leadership skills.

In February, we sponsored four women from fire-affected areas to attend the 2013 National Rural Women's Conference in Canberra. The aim was to equip them with the knowledge and networks to become more effective leaders in their communities. In particular we sought to build the capacity of younger women. As result, these individuals are increasingly taking on leadership roles.

In the coming year, a key activity is facilitating the Murray Riverina Leadership Program which is designed to empower and develop leaders and emerging leaders - improving their project management skills, increasing their personal development and strengthening their networks.

Partners in learning

The Rural Support Program teamed with Macquarie University's Participation and Community Engagement (PACE) program to build professional capacity in rural community support. The PACE program is designed to allow students to engage with the community, learn through participation, and gain credit towards their degrees while being in a workplace setting. Based in the Orange office for four weeks, Bachelor of Health student Debbie Cole developed a resource to assist service providers in locating support services for people affected by suicide.

In the coming year, the Rural Support Program will continue its relationship with Macquarie and host two more students who will focus on community resource mapping. This will assist the program and RAAC to understand the resources and resource gaps existing within communities experiencing climate-related adversity.

What are the characteristics of a resilient community?

They function well under stress

They adapt successfully

They are self-reliant

They have social capacity

National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, Council of Australian Governments

Goal 2

To improve the capacity of farmers to better prepare, respond to, and recover more quickly from a range of adverse/emergency events

Adverse and emergency events preparation and recovery

The Rural Support Program assists farmers to better prepare for, respond to, and recover from adverse and emergency events. Risk identification and management is a critical part of this.

Regional Assistance Advisory Committee

Set up in March 2013, the Regional Assistance Advisory Committee (RAAC) is an independent committee tasked with providing advice on the vulnerability of rural communities to climate-related adversity, and advice on potential farm business, farm family and community support response programs and initiatives direct to the NSW Government.

The Rural Support Program provides project support to RAAC and produces Regional Seasonal Condition Reports on their behalf. These reports provide available climate data and forecasts that can aid farmer decision-making.

From 1 January 2014, we will work with the 11 new Local Land Services organisations to help them and the communities they serve to make these reports locally relevant and a valuable planning tool for farmers. This relationship will also provide a pathway for monitoring the wellbeing of farm communities. This valuable information will be made available to RAAC to help them understand regional vulnerabilities.

Natural disaster mitigation and recovery

In NSW, emergency management focuses on four aspects - prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. The Rural Support Program plays an integral part in delivery of three of these: prevention, preparedness and recovery.

The Rural Support Program worked with other supporting agencies to assist those affected by a number of flood and bushfire disasters in 2012-13. The focus was on recovery as concurrent events hit farmers and communities across NSW. Up to 50% of the Rural Support Workers' time was spent on disaster recovery over the summer.

Rural Support Workers assisted at bushfire and flood recovery centres and recovery activities across the State, and organised and ran information workshops in affected communities. Their individual skills, experience and networks allowed them to provide support to those who need it or to direct them to the appropriate place.



Michael Priest (L), Sean Brady (R) review maps for data for Seasonal Condition Reports with Rural Support Program's technical expert Ian McGowan (C).

Right: Rural Support Worker Di Pritchard facilitates a session at the Working Together to Deal with Natural Disaster Conference

Far right: Wambelong bushfire burned 54,000 hectares in northern NSW

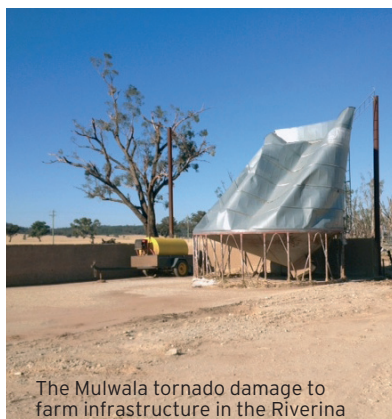
Below: A farm house isolated by floods in northern NSW



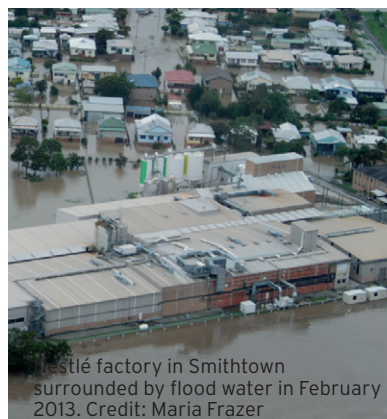
Just a quick note to say thank you for your support after the fires in January 2013.

We suffered huge losses and were thrown into chaos. The morning teas you organised for women in the area were fantastic. There were many stories told and tears shared. It was a great stress release and enjoyed and appreciated by all. Thank you.

**Caroline Anderson,
Bogalara Station,
Bookham**



The Mulwala tornado damage to farm infrastructure in the Riverina



Estlé factory in Smithtown surrounded by flood water in February 2013. Credit: Maria Frazer

Major events included:

Mulwala tornado

The Rural Support Program was involved in the development and implementation of a recovery plan following the tornado which affected properties in the area around Mulwala in the Riverina, with many homes and machinery destroyed.

The plan identified the impacts to the social, built, economic and natural environments and established actions to address psychological stress, clear away debris, identify available funding from government and community support services, and provide assistance with insurance claims. We participated on the Recovery Committee, an information evening and at Recovery/Information day, service provider debriefing sessions and community gatherings.

Cobbler Road bushfire, Bookham

The Rural Support Program co-hosted a community gathering of 250 to allow affected farmers and those who assisted in the fire to discuss their experiences. They met agency staff who provided various services to assist them with recovery. A meeting for the community's women was also held in the fire-affected area. Counselling services were provided by the Police Chaplain.

North Coast

Extreme weather events plagued the NSW North Coast in January 2013, including major floods and damaging winds in the wake of tropical cyclone Oswald, with major damage reported between the Queensland border and the Hunter Valley. Upper Coopers Creek also suffered a serious landslide. In total, 13 local government areas were officially declared disaster areas. Over the last year, the Rural Support Program has assisted the area in various recovery activities including working with local government in the provision of emergency response activities, involvement with the Disaster Recovery Centre, and outreach programs. Other activities included developing a local post-flood recovery newsletter and bringing some training to local communities' services in their response to dealing with difficult emotions.

Wambelong Bushfire

In January 2013, a bushfire in and around Warrumbungle National Park near Coonabarabran burned 54,000 hectares and 53 homes. Agricultural infrastructure and livestock were also lost. Many landholders were uninsured or underinsured. The Rural Support Program worked with the local community on a range of recovery activities. A women's group was formed and a men's health workshop conducted to help build resilience following the disaster.

Sharing knowledge and learnings

A key role of the Rural Support Program is to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and learnings on how communities have responded to natural disasters in order to improve future preparation and response. Rural Support Worker Di Pritchard chaired the steering group for the "Working Together to Deal with Natural Disaster" Conference for community services, local and State Government, volunteer organisations and emergency service organisations. More than 90 attendees involved in emergency response and recovery met in early July 2013 to share insights and knowledge to provide a more coordinated approach for communities in the Greater Hume Shire, Lockhart Shire and Urana Shire.

Goal 3

To improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of farmers and farming communities

Community health and wellbeing

The physical and mental health and wellbeing of farmers and farming communities underpins a resilient rural NSW. The Rural Support Program assists people to access resources which promote health and wellbeing. Men's health and suicide prevention have been identified as areas of particular need.

Men's health

The Rural Support Program continued to focus on men's health. We ran the PitStop program at the Australian National Field Days and the Mudgee Small Farms Field Days in conjunction with the Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP). PitStop provides basic health checks and advice for men, with the aim of encouraging them to take control of their own health and be proactive.

We supported 25 Men's Health Workshops presented by Steve Carroll across NSW, several in conjunction with RAMHP. The workshops presented critical health information in an accessible way which made the events social and fun, as well as practical.

In partnership with the Rotary Club of Dubbo South, the Rural Support Program reprinted 5000 copies of the "Mates Helping Mates" CD, launched in 2012, which tells one man's story of his experience with depression and the importance of talking with friends and maintaining

connections. There has been considerable demand from community groups for the CDs which provide a quiet and personal support experience.

We have also facilitated four workshops on "Effective Ways of Engaging Men" across NSW to assist service providers to better engage with men when planning and providing their services.

Suicide prevention

Suicide is considered to be a significant public health issue and especially for those living in rural and remote communities of Australia. People who reside outside major cities were around 66% more likely to die as a result of suicide compared to persons living inside major cities in 2008 (ABS 2011).

During the year, the Rural Support Program worked with suicide prevention networks across NSW to address the issue. A core part of this was running three workshops fronted by Dr Dianna Sands - a clinician, author and researcher with more than 20 years' experience working with people bereaved by suicide. The topics were:

- Support following suicide (aimed at General Practitioners)
- Postvention as prevention - the impact of suicide on families
- Supporting children bereaved by suicide



Farm safety workshop,
Casino



Rural Support Program's Jamy Somerville (L) and Cheryl Pope (R) with Dr Dianna Sands (C) worked together to deliver suicide prevention workshops



**You saved my
husband's life,
thank you.**

*Wife of men's health
workshop participant*

In September 2013, the Rural Support Program will participate in R U OK? Day activities in conjunction with Southern Medicare Local and the Goulburn and District Suicide Prevention Network. The Rural Support Program is assisting the Goulburn group in the purchase of promotional materials for use at various events.

Farm safety

Rural industries have a particularly high incident rate of occupation-related injury and fatality compared to other industries throughout NSW. The Rural Support Program helps to bring together safety experts and support events for school and community groups on the subject and facilitates access to farm safety resources. We supported two significant farm safety initiatives during the year.

The Rural Support Program is represented on the Casino Farm Safety Committee which hosted the annual Farm Safety Day in May. This year's focus was youth and the day was attended by more than 40 students from local high schools and the TAFE college. It delivered theoretical understanding and practical experience on general farm safety including tractors, power, quad bikes, working and handling cattle and horse handling.

Social indicators

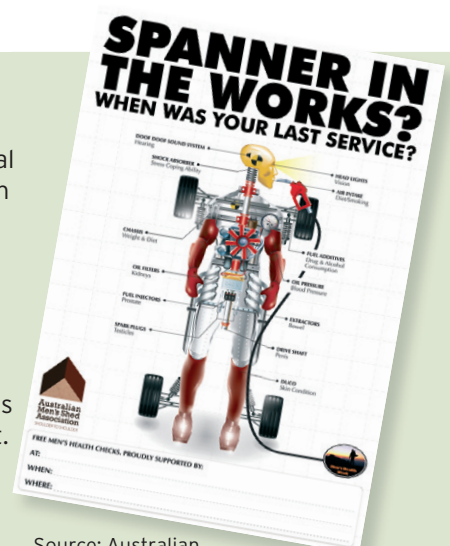
The Rural Support Program is undertaking a research project on how to measure the social indicators of wellbeing in rural communities. In particular we are keen to know what changes in wellbeing occur as seasonal conditions deteriorate.

An early identification of factors that indicate a decline in a community's coping capacity will help service providers to plan prevention and early intervention strategies. This is one of a number of inputs that will provide RAAC with information to formulate advice about future community support planning.

Men take a health pitstop

An enthusiastic multidisciplinary team of Community Health staff ran the PitStop Program at Borenore during the Australian National Field days in October, 2012. Visiting men had blood pressures taken and girths measured, and answered questions about their coping skills. More than 250 men participated over the three-day event. Of these:

- 28% had blood pressure problems and were advised to follow through with their GP
- 60% of men did not meet the recommended girth measurements and were encouraged to do more exercise and improve their diet.
- 14% of men indicated they had stress in their life including grief due to loss of a family member or work related issues.



Source: Australian
Men's Shed Association

Goal 4

To increase community confidence in and access to government information and programs through a range of awareness raising and educational opportunities, and strategic engagement

Community engagement

The Rural Support Program uses a range of models of engagement to work with rural communities in NSW. There are several levels of community engagement underpinned by the principles of information, participation, consultation, collaboration and empowerment. We facilitate engagement at each of these levels as well as disseminating or providing access to government information, programs and services, particularly in areas such as financial support, primary production services and personal wellbeing.

Community engagement strategy

A strategic approach is required to ensure engagement with and between rural communities is effective. In conjunction with the NSW DPI's Biosecurity Branch, we will participate in the development of a community engagement plan for the Agriculture and Animal Services Functional Area (AASFA). This will contribute to the program's work in building resilience and capacity in rural and regional communities.

The plan will:

- Foster and develop links across agencies with other community engagement teams and networks including local government, State Government, non-government organisations and the wider community
- Undertake community profiling and identify communication networks to enable targeted delivery of community engagement activities that enhance animal welfare resilience
- Design and develop a State-level community engagement strategy for the AASFA that can be delivered through regional and local community engagement and capacity-building action plans and projects
- Develop community engagement tools on behalf of NSW DPI that can be utilised by all agencies
- Monitor, evaluate and document the community engagement and capacity building activities to enable reporting and validation of resource allocation
- Work to identify, and add value to, existing community engagement programs.



Left: Moulimein dinner, International Women's Day
Below left: Henty dinner, International Women's Day
Below: Rural Support Worker Dick Kearins (L) with NSW oyster farmers at their annual conference



We just got a call from a primary producer who we assisted after the Grafton floods destroyed a bridge leading to her property. We provided support and encouraged the woman to tackle the problem with the Council. The Council has now come to the party and replaced the bridge. Norma said the most important message she got from us was "don't give up when you believe you are in the right, get as much information as you can, get informed".

**Rural Support Worker,
Northern NSW**

Industry support

The Rural Support Program provides targeted support to the farming community in times of stress.

As the dairy industry faces difficult financial times the Rural Support Workers and dairy officers have met with dairy farmers and farmer groups to discuss impacts on incomes, emotional wellbeing of farmers and ways to support impacted farmers. The Rural Support Program set up social brunch meetings in the Illawarra-Shoalhaven and Southern Highlands regions with the aim of building awareness of a range of support services available including DPI decision support tools, rural financial counsellors and Rural Support Workers.

Very positive feedback was received from the 80+ people who attended.

The Rural Support Program also offered support to NSW oyster farmers. In 2012 a Rural Support Worker presented a session on succession planning at the Annual Conference. In 2013, we will again participate, providing information on lessons learned from other agricultural industries that may be transferable to oyster farmers.

Working with rural women

The Rural Support Program undertook some key activities to support women in rural NSW.

A Women's Retreat at Laurel Hill Forest Lodge was organised by Batlow Women's Reference Group and attended by 28 women from across the region including Batlow,

Tumbarumba, Wagga, Tarcutta, Narrandera and Albury.

The retreat was held to give women in the region a chance to relax, socialise and attend sessions to improve their resilience after the many adverse events that had affected the region in recent times.

International Women's Day presented an opportunity to celebrate the contribution of women to rural communities. A dinner at Henty was attended by 200 women from the area, with ages ranging from 30 to 85. The Rural Support Program took a lead role in facilitating the dinner, as part of the Women's Reference Group. They helped to fund the evening in partnership with the Bendigo Bank, the Henty Bowling Club and the Presentation Sisters.

Pathways to resilience

On the North Coast, a pilot project has been established on 'Pathways to increasing agricultural production resilience on the coastal floodplain' coordinated by NSW DPI, the Rural Support Program and industry groups including Dairy Australia, Subtropical Dairy, Dairy Connect, NSW Farmers, NSW SES, Rural Financial Counsellor, and sugar cane industry representatives.

They are working together to: increase the capacity and capability of the dairy and sugar cane industries on the Far North and Mid North Coast to mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from the risk and impact of floods, in order to maintain the long term productivity and sustainability of the industries. Consultation with people across the industry groups and with other key stakeholders is a critical part of the project. The first consultation workshop was held in May 2013 at Coffs Harbour. The workshops have set strategic directions with practical action-orientated activities.



(From left) Julie Dart, Dairy Officer;
Jen Haberecht, Rural Support Worker;
Peter James, LHPA; Cathy Oliver,
Kempsey Shire

Community engagement

Strategic advice

Drawing on our field and technical experience, we also provide strategic advice to the NSW Government. This year we provided input into two critical policies and legislation development, and contributed to three cabinet papers and 23 advisory or web publications.

Rural Support Workers informed rural communities of important changes to legislation, service provision, assistance programs available and expiry dates of assistance programs following natural disasters, through hard copy and electronically distributed newsletters. The provision of timely information to the communities relieved the stress on those recovering from the impact of floods, storms and fires experienced across NSW.



Laurel Hill Women's Retreat

Batlow experienced a major hail event in 2010 and the devastation of a large proportion of the apple crops by hail storm in November 2011. Floods and grassfires in the region followed. There has been a substantial impact to the Batlow community, in particular on the high proportion of people employed in the apple industry.

The Rural Support Program played an active part in the formation of a local Women's Reference Group following these events. The group reported that the women of the community had been supporting their families economically, emotionally and socially with significant mental health consequences for some of them.

In response, a retreat for local women was planned. The weekend provided women with an opportunity to relax, connect with each other, and share their experiences related to the adverse events affecting their families. It also gave the women an opportunity to explore their own emotions around the adverse events in a supportive environment and to access mental health education about self-care, recovery and pathways to further care as required.

Through the Rural Support Program, the Ministry has developed greater linkages with rural communities, further awareness of rural and remote needs, and greater capacity to address these.

Raechel Squires
Senior Manager,
Response and Recovery
Ministry for Police and
Emergency Services

Working with partners



Rural Support Worker
Di Pritchard (L) with RAMHP
worker Helen Sheather

Partners are critical to our success in delivering products and services to individuals and communities. We work with them in a range of ways:

State Government agencies - in facilitating relationships and access to services at local levels. We work with the Ministry of Police and Emergency Services in emergency response. With Regional Services, we work to build leadership capacity in communities. We partner with the Department of Premier and Cabinet to provide input into policy and planning. We jointly deliver seminars and workshops, and provide access to services with RAMHP.

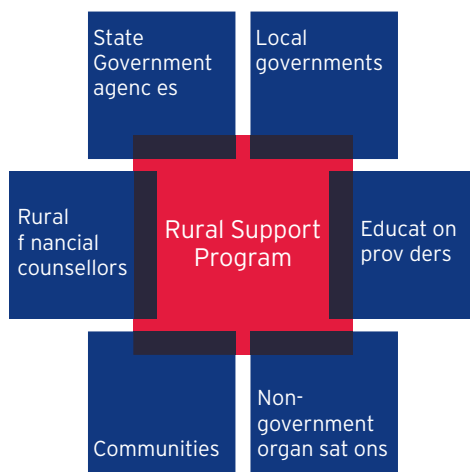
Local governments - in immediate recovery from emergencies and in developing plans for better responses to future events. Following the North Coast floods, and the Bookham and Wambelong fires, we had significant engagement with the Port Macquarie-Hastings, Kempsey, Yass Valley, and Warrumbungle shires.

Non-government organisations (NGOs) - in helping communities understand and access services offered by NGOs, and in supporting NGOs to deliver products and services into communities. We have worked with Red Cross and Wesley LifeForce to deliver suicide awareness programs, and with a number of other agencies including the Salvation Army and Uniting Church.

Education providers - in developing research questions to better understand and implement community engagement. We offer practical experience to Macquarie University students. We work with the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health (through RAMHP) to deliver local workshops, seminars, and activities to enhance the wellbeing of farm communities. We assist communities to access existing skills programs, including primary production education in DPI's own colleges.

Rural Financial Counsellors - in facilitating access to training and development activities for individual farm businesses to improve their financial performance and profitability.

Communities and their organisations - in identifying their assets and finding pathways to meet their aspirations. This includes visioning, identifying leaders and resources, and assisting communities to access government and non-government services and networks. We facilitate formal and informal networks, and work with interagency groups in farm communities to strengthen engagement. We assist in the creation of social space for increased community wellbeing and resilience. We also work with communities in preparation for adverse events, and support them following these events.





Department of
Primary Industries

Rural Support Program

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Disclaimer: The information contained in
this publication is based on knowledge
and understanding at the time of writing
(July 2013). However, because of advances
in knowledge, users are reminded of the
need to ensure that information on which
they rely is up to date and to check the
currency of the information with the Leader
of the Rural Support Program or the user's
independent advisor.