



**Australian Government**

# DROUGHT

IN AUSTRALIA

**Assistance for individuals, families, farms and communities in drought regions**

## **AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SUPPORT AND NATIONAL SERVICES**

Individuals, families, farms and rural and regional communities can access a range of services and support to help them manage during times of drought and prepare for future conditions.

It's important that those in need of support do not self-assess their eligibility for assistance and instead seek advice from an expert, like a rural financial counsellor.

### **FOR INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES**

#### **Financial assistance and advice**

##### **Farm Household Allowance**

Farm Household Allowance (FHA) provides up to four years of support to eligible farming families experiencing financial hardship. The allowance, which is paid fortnightly and totals around \$16,000 a year, is designed to help people meet basic household needs.

An FHA supplement lump-sum payment of up to \$7200 for single farmers and \$12,000 for farming couples is available in two instalments to eligible farmers receiving FHA between 1 September 2018 and 1 June 2019. To be eligible for the first payment of up to \$3,600 for singles or \$6,000 for couples, farmers must lodge their FHA application form by 1 December.

For more information visit [www.agriculture.gov.au/fha](http://www.agriculture.gov.au/fha), call the Farmer Assistance Hotline on 132 316, or contact a rural financial counsellor on 1800 686 175 and they will help you apply if you're eligible. To apply, visit <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/farm-household-allowance>.

### **Emergency relief**

People who require financial assistance due to the drought may be eligible for help through the Emergency Relief program, which provides immediate financial and/or material support. Emergency Relief is delivered by community organisations to help with immediate basic needs during a crisis. The assistance offered may include:

- food, transport or chemist vouchers
- part-payment of utility account/s
- food parcels or clothing
- budgeting assistance and/or
- referrals to other services that help to address underlying causes of financial crisis.

To find a provider offering Emergency Relief support visit <https://serviceproviders.dss.gov.au/>

### **Rural Financial Counselling Service**

The Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) provides free financial counselling to farmers, fishers, forest growers and harvesters and small related businesses who are suffering financial hardship. It's a confidential, independent, mobile service available in all states and territories.

For more information call 1800 686 175 or visit [www.agriculture.gov.au/rfcs](http://www.agriculture.gov.au/rfcs).

### **Financial Information Service**

The Financial Information Service is a free, confidential service that provides education and information on financial and lifestyle issues to all Australians.

For more information go to [www.humanservices.gov.au/FIS](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/FIS) or call 132 300

### **QLD Farm Liaison Officer**

The Farm Liaison Officer connects farmers, businesses and communities with available assistance. The Farm Liaison Officer is based in Longreach and travels between the regions of Queensland North and Queensland Southern.

Contact Farm Liaison Officer Tahna Jackson on 0409 357 211 or [tjackson@rfcsnq.com.au](mailto:tjackson@rfcsnq.com.au)

## **Education and childcare support**

### **Help with boarding school fees**

The Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme supports parents and carers of children who cannot go to a local government school because of geographic isolation, disability or special needs. The AIC helps isolated families of primary, secondary and certain tertiary students with additional educational costs incurred as a result of their geographical isolation or because the student has special needs.

Some schools are discounting school fees, offering payment plans and additional scholarships. Contact schools directly to seek further information.

For more information and to apply visit <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/assistance-for-isolated-children-scheme>

### **In home care**

The In Home Care program provides flexible care that supports families' workforce participation and child care requirements where other options are not available or appropriate, particularly in rural and remote areas.

For more information visit <https://www.education.gov.au/in-home-care>

### **Mobile Service Centres**

Mobile Service Centres visit rural and regional areas to help people access Australian Government services and payments, like Farm Household Allowance. Mobile Service Centres are visiting drought-affected communities for the remainder of 2018 and into 2019.

You can access the visit schedule for the centres at <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/mobile-service-centres>

## **Skills and training**

### **Skills Checkpoint for Older Workers Program**

The Skills Checkpoint for Older Workers Program will provide support to Australians aged 45 to 70 that are employed and at risk of entering the income support system, or recently unemployed and not registered for assistance through an employment services program. The skills checkpoint will provide eligible Australians with advice and guidance on transitioning into new roles within their current industry or pathways to a new career, including referral to relevant education and training options.

The Skills Checkpoint will be available later this year. Find out more: <https://www.education.gov.au/skillscheckpointprogram>

## **Health and wellbeing**

### **Health Care Card**

You will automatically be issued a Health Care Card if you're eligible for Farm Household Allowance. A Health Care Card provides cheaper prescription medicines through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. It may also reduce council rates and land rates, as well as electricity, gas, water and telephone rental costs.

To find out more about Health Care Cards visit [www.humanservices.gov.au/healthcarecard](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/healthcarecard)

### **Primary Health Networks**

Primary Health Networks partner directly with general practitioners, other primary health care providers, secondary care providers and hospitals to improve outcomes for patients. To make the services more accessible, Australians located in rural areas can access counselling via Skype from the first appointment.

Find your local Primary Health Network at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/PHN-Home>

### **Access help from your home**

Under the existing Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Better Access telehealth initiative, people in rural and remote areas can now access up to 10 individual and/or 10 group mental health consultations without needing to leave their homes.

Talk to your GP or Primary Health Network about accessing this service.

Find your local Primary Health Network at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/PHN-Home>

### **Royal Flying Doctor Service mental health clinicians**

Royal Flying Doctor Service mental health clinicians provide in-field treatment of mild to moderate mental health conditions to outback communities where there is little or no other clinical mental health service.

For 24 hour medical and emergency help call 1300 697 337

### **Head to Health**

Head to Health makes it easy for people to access a range of free or low-cost Australian digital mental health services.

Find out more <http://headtohealth.gov.au>

### **Support for young people**

ReachOUT is a website-based mental health service for young people that provides information, support and resources to help them build resilience and connect with support. ReachOUT has received funding to raise awareness of their services in drought-affected communities and connect young people and their families connect with digital mental health services.

Go to <https://au.reachout.com/> to access a wealth of mental health resources

### **Lifeline**

Lifeline provides all Australians experiencing a personal crisis with access to 24 hour crisis support and suicide prevention services.

Call 131 114 or visit <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

### **MensLine Australia**

MensLine Australia is a national telephone and online support, information and referral service for men with family and relationship concerns.

Contact Mensline on 1300 78 99 78 or visit <https://mensline.org.au/>

## **FOR FARMS**

### **Tax and financial incentives**

#### **Low-interest loans**

Farmers can apply for farm investment loans and drought Loans to finance needs such as purchasing feed and fodder. For the first five years these loans will remain interest only and farmers with existing loans can refinance to take advantage of the interest-only option. The maximum loan size has increased from \$1 million to \$2 million.

For more information and to apply for loans visit <http://www.ric.gov.au/> or call 1800 875 675

#### **Farm Management Deposits Scheme**

The farm management deposits scheme is a risk-management tool to help primary producers deal with uneven cash flows. The scheme allows eligible farmers to deposit up to \$800,000 in pre-tax income from primary production in years of high income, which can be drawn on in future years. Farm management deposits can be used as offsets against a farmer's mortgage in certain circumstances.

For more information visit <https://www.ato.gov.au/Business/Primary-producers/In-detail/Farm-management-deposits-scheme/>

#### **Managing Farm Risk Program**

The Managing Farm Risk Program encourages farm businesses to consider insurance options to cover against drought and other production risks. The program provides one-off rebates for advice and assessments to help farmers prepare and apply for a new insurance policy. Rebates will be for half of the costs incurred by eligible farm businesses up to \$2500 (GST exclusive).

For more information visit [www.agriculture.gov.au/mfrp](http://www.agriculture.gov.au/mfrp)

#### **Accelerated depreciation for fodder and water infrastructure**

Accelerated depreciation arrangements, which allow an immediate deduction for the cost of new water facilities, fodder storage assets and fencing, are available to help farmers prepare for drought, assist with their cash flow and encourage on-farm investment. These measures include:

- depreciation of water facilities over 1 year (previously 3 years)
- depreciation of fodder storage assets over 1 year (previously up to 3 years)
- depreciation of fencing over 1 year (previously up to 30 years).

For more information visit <https://www.ato.gov.au/Business/Primary-producers/Livestock-and->

[other-assets/Depreciating-assets/](#)

### **Income tax averaging**

Income tax averaging allows farmers to even out their high and low income years and the tax payable over a maximum of five years, ensuring that they do not pay more tax over a number of years than taxpayers on comparable but steady incomes.

Recognising that business circumstances change over time, farmers can resume income tax averaging 10 years after they opted out. For example, farmers who opted out of income tax averaging in 2006-07 can resume income tax averaging for the 2017-18 financial year if their 2017-18 taxable primary production income is greater than the previous year.

For more information visit

<https://www.ato.gov.au/business/primary-producers/in-detail/tax-averaging-for-primary-producers/>

### **Emissions Reduction Fund**

The Emissions Reduction Fund provides incentives for Australian farmers and landholders to adopt new practices and technologies to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.

For more information visit

<http://www.cleanenergyregulator.gov.au/ERF/Want-to-participate-in-the-Emissions-Reduction-Fund>

### **R&D tax incentive**

The R&D Tax Incentives program provides an offset for some of a company's cost of doing eligible research and development activities by reducing a company's income tax liability.

For more information call 13 28 46 or visit

<https://www.business.gov.au/assistance/research-and-development-tax-incentive>

### **Australian Taxation Office advice**

The ATO is providing tailored assistance to drought-affected communities to help you manage your tax affairs and obligations.

Call 1800 806 218 or visit [www.ato.gov.au/drought](http://www.ato.gov.au/drought) for more information

### **Banks**

Many banks are offering assistance to their drought-affected customers, including deferral of loan payments, waiving of fees and loan restructuring.

Contact your bank to seek advice and to discuss options.

## **Water, environment and fodder assistance**

### **Managing weeds and pest animals**

A number of pest and weed management assistance measures are available to help reduce grazing pressure from pest animals, reduce damage from pest animals like wild dogs through culling and exclusion, and reduce weed invasion.

For more information visit [www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/assistance/pest-management](http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/assistance/pest-management)

### **Great Artesian Basin bore capping programme**

More funding will be provided to state and territory governments to enhance the long term water security of the Great Artesian Basin.

For more information visit <http://www.gabcc.gov.au/>

### **National Water Infrastructure Development Fund**

The National Water Infrastructure Development Fund builds water infrastructure across Australia. Grant funding of \$72 million is available through a special drought round to help state and territory governments identify and co-fund the construction of water infrastructure to increase the long-term water availability and security in drought-affected areas.

For more information visit <https://infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure/water-infrastructure/nwi-development-fund/>

### **Murray-Darling Basin Water Infrastructure Program**

The Murray-Darling Basin Water Infrastructure Program funds water efficiency projects across five streams - urban water, industrial water, off-farm projects, metering projects and on-farm projects in Queensland, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory.

For more information and to apply visit <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/water/mdb/programs/basin-wide/mdbwi-program>

### **Grants for communities most impacted by the Murray-Darling Basin Plan**

Grant funding is available to the Indigenous, remote, rural and regional communities of Collarenebri (NSW), Dirranbandi (Qld), St George (Qld) and Warren (NSW). Local engagement facilitators will help the communities identify development opportunities and funding options.

For more information visit <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/water/mdb/basin-plan/commitments/socio-economic-impacts>

## **Landcare**

Landcare provides support to farmers and fishers across Australia, to help them to adopt sustainable practices to increase productivity and environmental outcomes.

Call 1800 552 008 to find a local Landcare group near you, or visit <https://landcareaustralia.org.au/landcare-get-involved/findagroup/?postcode>

## **Hiring staff**

### **Harvest Labour Services**

Harvest Labour Services link workers with seasonal harvest jobs in 11 rural and remote locations across Australia. These locations do not have adequate local labour supply to meet seasonal peaks in employer demand. Harvest Labour Services will screen and match workers for your vacancies.

Find a local Harvest Labour Services provider  
<https://jobsearch.gov.au/serviceproviders/search?emp=1>

### **Australian Apprentice Wage Subsidy**

From 1 January 2019, regional and rural businesses will be able to access the Australian Apprentice Wage Subsidy. The subsidy will be available to employers who take on a new apprentice undertaking a full-time Certificate III or IV qualification that leads to an occupation listed on the National Skills Needs List. The subsidy will provide support in the first three years of an Australian Apprenticeship as follows:

- 75 per cent of the first year award wage
- 50 per cent of the second year award wage
- 25 per cent of the third year award wage.

Contact an Apprenticeship Network Provider in your region:  
<https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/find-my-aasn/map>

## **Other support**

### **Electricity payments**

Some electricity companies are waiving certain charges and offering deferred payment options to their customers.

Contact your electricity company to seek advice and discuss options

## **FOR COMMUNITIES**

### **Drought Communities Programme**

The Drought Communities Programme (DCP) supports communities in the most drought-affected regions of Australia. Funding is available to eligible councils for local infrastructure projects and other drought-relief activities. Project funding is intended to provide short-term support, including by boosting local employment and purchasing, and addressing social and community needs. In 2018-19 the Drought Communities Program will provide up to \$1 million to 81 eligible councils to respond to the drought in their local area.

More information is available at  
<http://regional.gov.au/regional/programs/drought-communities.aspx>

### **Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal**

Communities in drought-affected areas can apply for grants of up to \$150,000 to support local responses to the drought. The grants will support a range of targeted projects that meet local needs, from upgrading local facilities, running an event that brings people together, to skill and development sessions.

For more information and to apply for a grant visit  
<https://www.frrr.org.au/grants/TTTT>

### **Stronger Communities Programme**

The Stronger Communities Programme provides grants of between \$2,500 and \$20,000 to community organisations and local governments for small capital projects that deliver social benefits for local communities.

For more information visit  
<https://www.business.gov.au/assistance/stronger-communities-programme>

### **Empowering Communities program**

The Empowering Communities program, funded through Primary Health Networks (PHNs), allows local communities to tailor local mental health responses to their needs. Eligible communities can apply for up to \$1 million for community-led initiatives that improve mental health and community resilience.

Find out more at  
<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/PHN-Home>

### **Building Better Regions Fund**

The Building Better Regions Fund supports infrastructure and community investment projects. Grant funding is available through two funding streams:

- The Infrastructure Projects Stream supports projects that involve construction of new infrastructure, or the upgrade or extension of existing infrastructure
- The Community Investments Stream funds community development activities including, but not limited to, new or expanded local events, strategic regional plans, leadership and capability building activities

For more information visit

<https://www.business.gov.au/assistance/building-better-regions-fund>

### **Local Employment Initiative Fund**

A Local Employment Initiative Fund of \$1 million is available in 10 regions across Australia. Local stakeholders in the selected regions can develop employment-related project proposals for consideration by their local RDA committee. Grants of between \$7,500 and \$200,000 are available.

For more information visit <https://www.jobs.gov.au/regional-employment-trials-program>

## STATE AND TERRITORY SUPPORT

Your local state or territory government also provides drought support. Contact your state to access local support.

### New South Wales

DroughtHub is a one-stop online destination for information on services and support available to primary producers, their families and communities to prepare for and manage drought conditions.

Visit <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/droughthub>

### Queensland

Queensland farm families, farm businesses and farm communities can access drought assistance programs.

Visit <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/environment/drought/assistance-programs>

The Long Paddock provides climate and pasture information to primary producers in Queensland. It provides access to rainfall and pasture outlooks and decision support tools to guide land management planning and decision making.

Visit <https://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/>

### Victoria

Information about drought assistance programs available to Victorian farm families, farm businesses and farm communities is available.

Visit <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farm-management/drought>

### South Australia

Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA) provides support and information to those experiencing drought.

Visit [http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/grants\\_and\\_assistance](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/grants_and_assistance)

### Western Australia

Resources are available to help WA farmers prepare for and manage during drought.

Visit <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/climate-land-water/climate-weather/drought-and-dry-seasons>

### Tasmania

Additional support is available to Tasmanian farming businesses and families.

Visit <https://dpiwwe.tas.gov.au/agriculture/government-and-community-programs/managing-seasonal-conditions/support-for-farming-businesses-and-families>

### **Northern Territory**

Resources are available to help NT farmers prepare for and manage during drought.

Visit <https://securent.nt.gov.au/prepare-for-an-emergency/droughts>

### **Australian Capital Territory**

The ACT Government has a range of programs that provide immediate assistance to farmers experiencing drought and help farmers prepare for future conditions.

Visit <http://www.environment.act.gov.au/act-nrm/act-farmers-support-package>

## **CHARITIES PROVIDING DROUGHT RELIEF**

National and local charities are providing support to Australians in drought-affected regions. Speak to a local charity representative about accessing vouchers for food and basic living needs, feed for livestock, or other support.

### **Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC)**

Australians who want to make a donation to help people in drought impacted regions should check that the charity is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) or the relevant state and territory regulator. Ask for identification from the person seeking a donation and visit the organisation's website to find out how they are using the donated funds to help those in need.

Find out more <https://www.acnc.gov.au/>

### **Country Women's Association**

The Country Women's Association works with its member associations to distribute funds to Australians affected by drought.

Find your local CWA branch here <https://www.cwaa.org.au/advocacy-policy/donations-assistance>

### **Salvation Army**

The Salvation Army is assisting Australians in drought-affected areas.

Individuals in NSW, QLD and the ACT can seek assistance by calling 02 8757 8088 or by completing an online assistance form here <https://salvos.org.au/about-us/news-and-stories/disasters-other-appeals/2018-droughts/access-drought-assistance/>

Those in other states and territories can search for a local support network <https://salvationarmy.org.au/Find-Us/>

### **Rotary Australia World Community Services**

Rotary is delivering drought relief across Australia.

Find your local drought assistance contact <http://rawcs.org.au/>

### **Lions**

Lions is providing feed for livestock to farmers in need.

Apply for assistance online <http://www.needforfeed.org/apply-for-assistance.html> or call 0459 444 111.

### **St Vincent de Paul**

St Vincent de Paul is providing immediate relief to drought affected communities, funding the delivery of water and animal feed and organising events for rural communities to come together and access support.

Contact your local branch <https://www.vinnies.org.au/findhelp>

### **Red Cross**

Red Cross is partnering with the Country Women's Association in Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia, and with the Rural Financial Counselling Service in Victoria to get funds and support to those in need in drought regions.

Apply for assistance [www.redcross.org.au/drought](http://www.redcross.org.au/drought)

### **Foodbank**

Foodbank is supplying food and personal care hampers and pantry staples through their charity partners to people in need in rural and regional areas.

To access assistance call 02 9887 4144 or visit <https://www.foodbank.org.au/>

### **GIVIT**

GIVIT works with local charities, community groups, the state government and councils in an affected area to help them obtain exactly what is needed, when it is needed. GIVIT matches donation offers with identified requests from charities and community service providers.

Find out more <http://www.givit.org.au/>