



**Australian Government**

# DROUGHT

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IN AUSTRALIA

Communication pack for local councils

- Shell media release (Attachment A)
- Message from the Mayor/Newsletter article (Attachment B)
- Social media content (Attachment C)
- Drought assistance information pack (Attachment D)

**SHELL MEDIA RELEASE**

**Drought support available in [Local Government Area]**

Individuals, families, farms and communities in [Local Government Area] can access a range of national, state and local drought support services.

"The drought has hit us hard. Some people were able to prepare well to get through this drought, but others in our community are doing it particularly tough," said [Insert name of Mayor].

"My message to them is we are in this together and there is a lot of support available."

The Australian Government provides a comprehensive range of immediate and longer term support programs and initiatives to help people manage during the drought and prepare for the future.

The support on offer includes financial assistance and advice, funding for children's school fees, health and wellbeing services, tax and financial incentives, water and environment initiatives and support for communities.

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.

"The Rural Financial Counselling Service can help you apply for FHA and develop an action plan to get on top of your finances," said [Insert name of Mayor].

"Get in contact with our local Rural Financial Counsellor [insert name of local Rural Financial Counsellor] or call 1800 686 175 to book an appointment.

Eligible parents and carers in rural and remote areas can access funding and support for education and childcare to take some of the pressure off. The Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme offers a boarding allowance or distance education support and second home allowance, depending on your circumstances.

**Comment [PJ1]:** Local councils can locate their closest Rural Financial Counsellor here: <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/assistance/rural-financial-counselling-service>

"There's also support for families with younger children. The In Home Care program helps parents in rural and remote areas to balance their working responsibilities with flexible care options," said [Insert name of Mayor].

Farming businesses can access help to manage their business operations now and into the future.

Drought is part of the Australian landscape and we need to plan and be prepared for the droughts of the future.

"I encourage primary producers to investigate low-interest loan options, insurance rebates, tax and depreciation options and water and environment incentives to better prepare their businesses for future challenges, including droughts," said [Insert name of Mayor].

The Australian Taxation Office has a range of support options for individuals and businesses experiencing drought, including payment plans, more time to lodge and pay tax bills and penalty waivers. Call the ATO on 1800 806 218 for tailored assistance.

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.

The effects of the drought are hurting our broader community, with businesses also feeling the pinch as people spend less in town.

Through the Australian Government's Drought Communities Programme our community is [tapping into/working to tap into] \$1 million of grant funding to meet our community's needs.

"[We're using/we plan to use] this funding to [insert details of DCP projects]. These projects [are creating/will create] local jobs which will help the local economy," said [Insert name of Mayor].

"The people in our community are resilient, but drought is challenging and it can take its toll on everyone's health and wellbeing."

"People feeling the pressure need to reach out and talk with someone. Your GP can connect you to a range of services, including telehealth services that allow you to talk to trained professionals via Skype from the privacy of your home. There are other great online and phone services too, like Head to Health and Lifeline."

People in crisis can call Lifeline's 24 hour support line on 13 11 14.

All levels of Government recognise the wide-reaching effects of the drought and additional support is available from the [insert relevant State/Territory and local government].

[Include details of relevant state/local drought support initiatives].

Charities and community organisations are providing much needed support to rural communities. Contact a local organisation like the Country Women's Association or the Salvation Army to access assistance for basic needs.

For more information and to apply for Australian Government drought assistance visit <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought> or call 1800 900 090.

To access state/territory and local drought support visit [insert relevant link] or call [insert relevant number].

Contact [Insert contact information].

## **ATTACHMENT B**

### **MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR/NEWSLETTER ARTICLE**

**There's drought support available for individuals, families and communities in [Local Government Area]**

Individuals, families, farms and communities in [Local Government Area] can access a range of national, state and local drought support services.

The drought has hit the region hard and some people in the community are doing it particularly tough.

There is plenty of support available across all levels of Government and from community organisations.

The Australian Government provides a comprehensive range of immediate and longer term support programs and initiatives to help people manage during the drought and prepare for the future.

The support on offer includes financial assistance and advice, funding for children's school fees, health and wellbeing services, tax and financial incentives, water and environment initiatives and support for communities.

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.

The Rural Financial Counselling Service can help you apply for FHA and develop an action plan to get on top of your finances.

Contact your local Rural Financial Counsellor [\[insert name of local Rural Financial Counsellor\]](#) or call 1800 686 175 to book an appointment.

Eligible parents and carers in rural and remote areas can access funding and support for education and childcare to take some of the pressure off. The Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme offers a boarding allowance or distance education support and second home allowance, depending on your circumstances.

There's also support for families with younger children. The In Home Care program helps parents in rural and remote areas to balance their working responsibilities with flexible care options.

Farming businesses can access help to manage their business operations now and into the future.

There's low-interest loan options, insurance rebates, tax and depreciation options and water and environment incentives to help people prepare their business for future challenges, including droughts.

The Australian Taxation Office has a range of support options for individuals and businesses experiencing drought, including payment plans, more time to lodge and pay tax bills and penalty waivers. Call the ATO on 1800 806 218 for tailored assistance.

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.

The effects of the drought are hurting our broader community, with businesses feeling the pinch as people spend less in towns.

Through the Australian Government's Drought Communities Programme our community is [\[tapping into/working to tap into\]](#) \$1 million of grant funding to meet our community's needs.

[\[We're using/we plan to use\]](#) this funding to [\[insert details of DCP projects\]](#). These projects [\[are creating/will create\]](#) local jobs which will help the local economy.

The people in our community are resilient, but this drought is taxing and it can take its toll on everyone's health and wellbeing.

People feeling the pressure need to reach out and talk to someone. Your GP can connect you to a range of services, including telehealth services that allow you to talk to trained professionals via Skype from the privacy of your home. There are other great online and phone services too, like Head to Health and Lifeline.

People in crisis can call Lifeline's 24 hour support line on 13 11 14.

**Comment [PJ2]:** Local councils can locate their closest Rural Financial Counsellor here: <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/assistance/rural-financial-counselling-service>

All levels of Government recognise the wide-reaching effects of the drought and additional support is available from the [insert relevant State/Territory and local government].

[Include details of relevant state/local drought support initiatives].

For more information and to apply for Australian Government drought assistance visit <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought> or call 1800 900 090.

To access state/territory and local drought support visit [insert relevant link] or call [insert relevant number].

Charities and community organisations are providing much needed support to rural communities. Contact a local charity representative about accessing vouchers for food and basic living needs, feed for livestock, or other support.

- Country Women's Association: <https://www.cwaa.org.au/advocacy-policy/donations-assistance>
- Salvation Army: Call 02 8757 8088 or visit <https://salvos.org.au/about-us/news-and-stories/disasters-other-appeals/2018-droughts/access-drought-assistance/>
- Rotary Australia: <http://rawcs.org.au/>
- Lions: Call 0459 444 111 or visit <http://www.needforfeed.org/apply-for-assistance.html>
- St Vincent de Paul: <https://www.vinnies.org.au/findhelp>
- Red Cross: [www.redcross.org.au/drought](http://www.redcross.org.au/drought)
- Foodbank: Call 02 9887 4144 or visit <https://www.foodbank.org.au/>

**ATTACHMENT C**

**SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT**

<b>Channel</b>	<b>Content</b>
Twitter	There's lots of drought support available to individuals, families and communities in [Local Government Area]. Find out more <a href="http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought">http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought</a>
Twitter	People in [Local Government Area] can access a range of drought support, including financial assistance, health and wellbeing services and tax and financial incentives <a href="http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought">http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought</a>
Twitter	Don't self-assess your eligibility for drought assistance. For more info and support visit <a href="http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought">http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought</a>
Twitter	Are you feeling the effects of the drought? There's lots of support available. Access help today <a href="http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought">http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought</a>
Facebook	Individuals, families, farms and communities in [Local Government Area] can access a range of services and support to help them manage during times of drought and prepare for future conditions.  For more information and to apply for assistance visit <a href="http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought">http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought</a>
Facebook	You can access a range of drought support, including financial assistance and advice, support for education costs, health and wellbeing services, tax and financial incentives, water and environment initiatives and support for communities.  Find out more <a href="http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought">http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought</a>
Facebook	Are you feeling the effects of the drought? There's a range of services and support to help you manage during times of drought and prepare for future conditions.  Find out more <a href="http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought">http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought</a>

Social media graphics have been provided as attachments.

**DROUGHT ASSISTANCE INFORMATION PACK**

See Attachment D.