

Drought Relief

Summer 2007: View from the Peak

A \$1million drought assistance package has been announced by the NSW Government to address mental health problems in drought-affected communities throughout the state.

The Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health (CRRMH) is overseeing the roll-out of the package, and MHCC is one of the many organisations involved in the steering committee.

The package will fund:

- 6 mental health workers;
- 15 farmers' mental health workshops;
- 50 mental health first aid (MHFA) training sessions for service providers; and
- A mental health resource package for health and agriculture support workers.

93.2% of NSW is now officially in drought, and a further 4.7% is marginal. The aims of the initiative are to increase early identification of mental health problems and appropriate referral, community education, interagency collaboration, and building sustainable changes. Locations of the MH workers and MHFA training have not yet been determined, but this will occur shortly. It is envisaged that since there are only 6 MH workers, they will have an outreach and coordination role to develop sustainable partnerships. The farmers' mental health workshops are in addition to the large number of farmers' family gatherings currently happening across NSW, and will have a clear mental health focus. The proposed locations are: Broken Hill, Condobolin, Corowa, Cowra, Crookwell, Deniliquin, Enngonia, Gunnedah, Inverell, Inverell, Mudgee, Singleton, Temora, Trangie/Warren, Walgett, and Wentworth.

Rural Mental Health Support Line - ph: 1800 201 123

A 24 hour 7 day a week mental health support line has been put in place by NSW Health for farmers and other members of rural communities. Many people in rural communities are facing pressures they find difficult to cope with, and need to speak to someone about their problems. The hotline can be accessed by people wanting to talk directly to someone, or by friends or family members who are concerned about someone else. The Rural Support Line can provide on-the-spot help in an immediate crisis, or help with referral to local specialist services.

DPI Drought Donation Register

The NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has established a drought donations register designed to co-ordinate donation delivery to families in the bush struggling with the drought. DPI will register donation pledges, and welfare organisations will access the register and arrange to receive and deliver the donation directly to those most in need. Groups and individuals can register their donation by contacting the hotline 1800 814 647.