
JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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DROUGHT AFFECTED FAMILIES WILL WELCOME ONGOING SUPPORT

Family Relationship Services Australia (FRSA) and Relationships Australia (RA) jointly welcome the Federal Government's continued investment in support for families affected by drought, as announced in the Federal Budget this week. This funding supports 25 Family Support Drought Response Teams to continue providing social and emotional counselling to families and ensure they get the services they need.

"The Drought Response Teams have been an excellent innovation in the way that family relationship services are delivered. Support is often provided on-farm, by a qualified counsellor who can respond on the spot to people experiencing stress, anxiety, depression or isolation. A range of flexible support options can be offered, often involving collaboration between local service providers", said Samantha Page, FRSA Executive Director.

"My experience is that the support which has been provided by these drought response teams has made a clear and positive impact on communities suffering under long-term drought conditions. The benefits of bringing people together and staying in touch through difficult times is indisputable" said Alison Brook, Relationships Australian National Executive Officer.

The following examples of the collaborative work undertaken by Drought Response teams have been provided by Relationships Australia:

- As part of the Latrobe Primary Care Partnership "*Pitstop*", Relationships Australia Victoria provided on-the-spot mental health checks and men's health information, using the analogy of *servicing and tuning your car*.
- In the Riverina, several partnerships have been forged to provide ongoing services to rural communities affected by drought. A counsellor working with drought-affected communities has been working with a Centrelink social worker to raise awareness (through a series of breakfasts for business people in regional communities working with farmers) about the effect of the drought on their clients. Many businesses are now participating in community support programs.
- A photographic competition was established in the Riverland district of South Australia to assist children affected by drought. 300 disposable cameras were distributed to school children, and tuition provided in photography by a local photographer. 1500 photos of their personal celebration of the Riverland were selected for exhibition. Visitors to the exhibition commented that the photos gave them hope for the future and reminded them that there is still beauty in their area, despite the drought.

"Ideally the Drought Response Teams would be funded for longer-term cycles. Even in areas where there has been recent rain, the legacy of high debt levels, periods of depression and the stress on rural families can continue for several years" said Samantha Page, FRSA Executive Director.

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FRSA is the national peak body for over 140 family relationship and support service providers, operating in more than 600 locations across Australia. For more information visit www.frsa.org.au. Relationships Australia provides services from over 200 outlets across all states and territories of Australia. For more information visit www.relationships.com.au