

# Emergency Drought Relief

## Mental Health Counselling and Supports



### The severe drought affecting NSW is having a significant impact on the economic prosperity of rural communities.

It is causing considerable distress to individuals reliant on agricultural production, and to frontline staff providing services to these communities.

The recent announcement of a further \$500 million for drought relief takes the NSW Government's total drought support package to more than \$1 billion. It includes an initial \$6.3 million over two years for mental health counselling and supports for those residing in drought affected areas of NSW that are suffering emotional distress or hardship.

### How NSW Health is supporting drought affected communities

A package of mental health supports has been developed that will provide additional interventions that cannot be met through existing NSW health services, to improve the health and wellbeing of farmers, their families and drought affected communities.

It will deliver resources flexibly tailored to where they are most needed and using methods most appropriate to the local communities. It includes 'on farm' counselling services, linking people struggling with their mental health into support services, and education and training for front line staff.

### Mental health counselling and supports for drought-stricken areas

#### Rural Adversity Mental Health Coordinators

New funding will provide for an additional five Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP) Coordinators. This builds on the existing fourteen Coordinators based across NSW who link rural and remote residents to services, and provide community education and support. The new positions will provide cover to Camden, Moss Vale, Bowral, Tamworth, Mudgee and Central Tablelands. The additional enhancement to RAMHP will also increase support through outreach to Southern, Far West and Northern local health districts depending on the intensity of the drought and vulnerability of communities in those areas. **To find your local RAMHP Coordinator, visit <http://www.ramhp.com.au/>**

#### National Association for Loss and Grief

NALAG a local community managed organisation with branches in rural NSW has been funded to run a series of sponsored and organised local events to encourage community engagement and awareness of local services, where farming families came to town to enjoy a free BBQ and can receive a free mental health and physical health check-up. Ten community events are planned over the next 12 months with more to follow. NALAG also offers a free telephone counselling service to those experiencing loss or grief. **National Association for Loss & Grief 02 6882 9222** (During Business Hours)

### Counselling Supports

Free 'farm gate' counselling and support will be available to people living and working in areas impacted by drought. This support will be available at a venue that suits the individual and their family – on the farm, in offices, at a café or via telephone. Local Health Districts will recruit six new clinicians and eight peer workers to deliver counselling and support to key areas in Hunter New England, Murrumbidgee and Western NSW local health districts. **For information about local services, contact the NSW Mental Health Line on 1800 011 511.**

### Research

A review has been undertaken to understand the pathways through which drought affects the mental health of people living in rural and regional communities, and investigates the type and outcomes of previous drought relief mental health support and services. The review advises on intervention target points for future support and will contribute to the development of innovative and sustainable interventions to support those living and working in rural and remote NSW.

Information about the review can be accessed from the [Sax Institute](#).

### How to get help

**Rural communities are resilient and resourceful but the effects of the long dry spell is taking its toll with people getting more stressed and upset.**

If you need help, either for yourself or someone else, consider speaking to your general practitioner or contact the NSW Mental Health Line – 1800 011 511.

If you are worried about someone's safety, please take them to your nearest hospital as soon as possible and in case of emergency call 000 immediately.

Information on services and supports available to prepare for and manage drought is available through NSW Drought Hub [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/droughthub](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/droughthub)