



## **Drought support available to the Southern Mallee community**

Individuals, families, farms and communities in the Southern Mallee District Council area can access a range of drought support services.

Council's Mayor Cr Andrew Grieger says "The drought has impacted Southern Mallee. Some people were able to prepare well to get through this drought, but others in our community are doing it particularly tough, 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.

The South Australian State Government through Primary Industries and Regions SA also offers a number of services and avenues for assistance to support farm families, farm businesses and rural communities prepare for and manage the drought conditions. This assistance includes hotline and animal welfare, the family and business support program, health and wellbeing assistance and technical and farming advice resources.

The Commonwealth 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.

The Rural Financial Counselling Service can help you apply for FHA and develop an action plan to get on top of your finances. Our local Rural Financial Counsellor, Lynton Keen, can be contacted on telephone 08 8531 2291, mobile 0448 092 294 or email [l.keen@ruralbusinesssupport.org.au](mailto:l.keen@ruralbusinesssupport.org.au) 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," said Mayor Cr Andrew Grieger.

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

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 the 1 million of grant funding to meet our community's needs. Council has committed this funding to the Southern Mallee Community Infrastructure Project. This will see the bulk of the funding go to fast track the development of new childcare facilities in Pinnaroo and Lameroo and some funding to renew community swimming pool facilities. "These projects have huge potential to increase civic pride, confidence and morale in the whole district and create widespread social and economic activity" said Mayor Cr Andrew Grieger. "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.

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.

For more information and to apply for South Australian Government drought assistance visit [http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/grants\\_and\\_assistance/drought\\_support](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/grants_and_assistance/drought_support)

There are also not for profit organisations providing much needed drought assistance. The Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal is providing communities in drought with the Tackling Tough Times Grants program. The objectives of the program include reducing social isolation, reducing volunteer fatigue and resilience and supporting local recovery or renewal. Community groups can access more information about this funding opportunity by visiting [https://www.frrr.org.au/grants/tackling\\_tough\\_times\\_together](https://www.frrr.org.au/grants/tackling_tough_times_together)

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