

DROUGHT OVERVIEW
ROTARY DISTRICT 9630 DROUGHT APPEAL
JULY, 2017

There are a couple of issues that have recently arisen which are affecting our Drought Relief effort. Instead of beginning to wind down and exit from the five-year effort, we are looking at maintaining, if not increasing our efforts.

Factors affecting us are the continuing drought in large areas of the south-west. Some areas have had relief rain and are experiencing some sort of a season whereas others, as close as the next-door neighbour, are as bad as ever.

The situation is about to be compounded mainly around Roma and Charleville where the Federal Government's Family Home Allowance (FHA) was withdrawn on 30th June 2017. It affects those who have been receiving the benefit for 3 years, the maximum period allowed under the legislation. RFCS (**R**ural **F**inancial **C**ounselling **S**ervice) advised that across the coverage area it will affect not just a few but 100s of people on the land.

The Rotary Club of Roma have not distributed vouchers for quite some time but have now recommenced by delivering them to the RFCS for distribution.

Generally speaking, the people on the FHA have not been RFCS clients up until now and may not have been previous voucher recipients.

The four Western Clubs of Roma, Mitchell, St George and Charleville are to be commended by all. They are very busy providing assistance through 'Vouchers' and 'Family Days'. Charleville is caring for an area which represents 11% of Queensland and have been ably assisted by the local Freemasons.

Feedback from our "Voucher" system, "Family Days" and our "Whole of Community" approach has been nothing short of fantastic, especially from the local businesses and communities to whom we have thrown a lifeline. I have many letters of appreciation and praise that we all can be extremely proud of.

The "Voucher" system is briefly, a system developed by Rotary whereby recipient landholders are identified mainly by the RFCS and forwarded vouchers drawn on their local town's participating businesses. This ensures that the goods and services needed are purchased locally thus supporting the "Whole Community". It is said that each Dollar of voucher circulates some 5 to 7 times within the community before leaching out.

Our aim is to keep these small communities viable and get through to the end of the drought which has been relentless for the last five years or more.

"Family Days" are sponsored by the Rotary Clubs in small communities to bring the drought affected together and basically "have a yarn" and support each other. It varies between each club and venue but generally speaking the day includes 'Pampering Stations' for the Ladies, Games for the Kiddies and Bar-B-Q and refreshments for all.

To date we have raised over \$860,000 of which approx. \$675,000 has been distributed to the Western Clubs for Drought Relief. Donations include \$266,000 by *Hand Heart Pocket* (the Charity of the Queensland Freemasons) also \$20,000 from RACQ Foundation with a further \$30,000 pledged by RACQ Foundation subject to meeting guidelines. Many other donations of significance including \$34,000 (Toowoomba Rotaract Clubs three fund raisers), \$21,000 (Central Blue Mountains Rotary Club), \$15,000 (Gatton and Lockyer Rotary Club), \$20,000 anonymous donation to name a few. However, we are humbled by the large number of

donations from people who are concerned and wish to help those country cousins who are “Doin it Tough”. Sincere thanks.

All donations are gratefully received and faithfully applied to the Relief Effort.

The *Hand Heart Pocket* and RACQ were drawn to our delivery system because there are no expenses as every dollar donated is used for the relief of the drought affected. All administration and delivery is voluntary. The RFCS are not charging for their services. The Royal Flying Doctor and Charleville Neighbourhood Centre do not charge for their services in identifying recipients.

Let me please take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your support to date. We do have some “Donor Fatigue” after such a long haul.

All we ask is that when dividing up your personal and/or club charity dollars that you consider those within a day’s drive of most of us who are “doin it real tough”.

For and on Behalf
Rotary District 9630 Drought Relief Appeal

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Phillip Charles". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the name.

PHILLIP CHARLES
Past District Governor
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