



Australian Red Cross: Drought Resilience Program

January 2021

Red Cross' drought resilience program aims to support communities, organisations, services and leaders to manage the psychosocial impacts of living with dryness.

All the offerings in this document are flexible and can be adapted to suit community needs.

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Program foundation

The program is based upon the principles of psychosocial support¹ and Red Cross' Psychological First Aid framework². It also draws on Red Cross' own experience supporting rural and regional communities before, during and after challenging times. It follows the Australian National Disaster Recovery Principles which are relevant for communities facing drought as the social fabric of ordinarily resilient communities are challenged and existing pressures for individuals and communities are exacerbated.

The current program is being delivered in four states; New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria. This document provides an overview of program offerings and can be contextualised and adapted to fit need. NB. These offerings are continually being developed and updated and so this is a working document.

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¹ For more information see The Sphere Project and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee

² For more information see Psychological First Aid; An Australian guide to supporting people affected by disaster



Training

for communities, organisations and service providers

Red Cross understands that community support is most effective when led by those best placed; community members, services and organisations. They have the skills and capacities yet do not often have access to training, support and resources specific to supporting communities living with dryness and related ongoing stress. The below offers skills development and capacity building for communities living with dryness.

Psychological First Aid

In line with best practice, Red Cross has developed Psychological First Aid (PFA) training. PFA is a humane, supportive response to a fellow human being who is suffering and who may need support. Training comprises of an online module followed by a one-day training. It has been recognised that this support is best delivered as a community-based activity so aims to provide participants with the skills to provide basic emotional support and psychological first aid to people affected by crises. Participants can be anyone in communities or on the front line engaging with drought affected people.

Supporting the Supporters

For many communities, there are no dedicated 'drought workers', the people who provide support are those that work across a range of community organisations and services, also likely to be affected by the drought personally. Red Cross has developed a short, flexible workshop that allows time for reflection on wellbeing, explores tools and information for themselves and colleagues. This is for anyone who supports their communities formally and informally.

“The work with Red Cross has really built sustainability... there has been increased knowledge across the board.”
- Community Organisation

Communicating in Communities Under Stress

This workshop and take-home guide is for individuals, services and organisations working and managing information in times of community wide stress. While drought affects people in different ways, the basic rules and methods of communication when communities are under stress are similar. This resource takes an all-hazards approach with no geographic focus, it includes information on stress, looks at communication methods, audiences, offers practical communication advice, looks at raising awareness of the importance of communications and provides an opportunity for people working in drought to network and share ideas.

Resilient Leaders

This workshop is aimed at building the leadership skills of community members. Red Cross recognises that people who are already active and involved in their own communities are in the people best place to assist those around them manage the challenges of living in dry times. The workshop supports participants to identify how they can play a role in building resilience in their community, explores tools to assist in supporting friends and family in dry times, looks at ways to mobilise communities and connects participants to local organisations to support community connectedness.

Farm First Aid

This is a one day first aid course that provides participants with a first aid certification. It is delivered in drought affected communities and has been condensed from a standard Red Cross two day course to a one day course to enable people to take less time off work and not travel long distances. It includes examples in a rural and farming context, includes a wellbeing module and is organised in conjunction with local organisations to support community and information connection.



“Fabulous theory & examples of practical applications for communicating effectively and respectfully”
- Community Service Provider



Guidance

for community leaders, organisations and services

Red Cross' expertise lies in connecting communities, services and people. As an independent agency that works Australia-wide, Red Cross is in a unique position to enable communities to link and share advice, knowledge and experiences.

A Network

Through our network Red Cross is able to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and experiences, connecting communities with people who have had similar experiences. Red Cross can also facilitate access to a range of experts that can provide communities with expertise and knowledge to inform their resilience building, this includes specialist psychologists, community leaders and experienced drought workers.

Mentor Program

The mentoring program is aimed at supporting communities through tough times. Red Cross links trained, volunteer mentors who have previous personal experience of drought with community leaders (e.g. school principals, local council members or a service providers) currently supporting their communities, to discuss and address the challenges posed by drought. The mentoring aims to:

- Help community leaders avoid unnecessary pitfalls
- Help normalise the experience
- Share their experiences, provide support and act as a sounding board

“Just connecting with someone who has been in a similar situation and knowing these feelings are normal was great”
- School Principal

Resources & publications

Webinars (accessible [here](#))

Listen to a five-part series of webinars exploring drought and wellbeing, the drought cycle and adaption, wellbeing after the rains, family wellbeing and preparing for tough times. Expert speakers along share their insights with us so we can better support our own communities, ourselves and our loved ones in these tough times

Podcast & Video Series (visit redcross.org.au/drytimes)

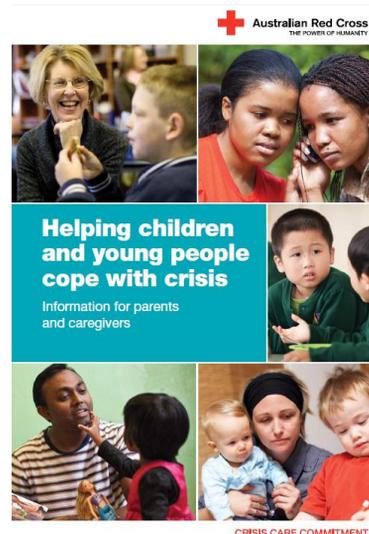
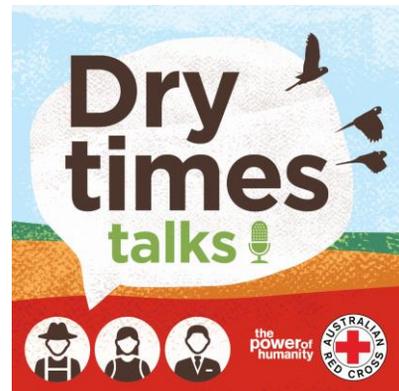
Dry Times Talks is a series about hope in drought. Over five short episodes, you'll hear stories from all around rural Australia alongside some simple tips to help look after yourself, your family and community through dry and other tough times. Episodes look at living and adapting to drought, disasters and prolonged stress, supporting your community and loved ones, looking after your own health and wellbeing, and preparing for tough times.

Wellbeing planning tool (under development)

A tool and guide for individuals and families living with dryness to support and build their wellbeing. Often when we talk about planning it relates to practical measures but our own and family wellbeing is just as important. This tool provides practical support for you and your loved ones in building resilience for the challenges dry times bring.

Community Messaging and Publications

- **Helping children and young people cope with crisis** is a guide for parents and caregivers. It helps carers identify symptoms of trauma and provides practical advice.
- **Community one pagers** are downloadable flyers with key messaging around typical reactions to stress, supporting others, having supporting conversations and looking after yourself.
- **Coping with a major personal crisis** is a booklet that contains information about some of the normal reactions and suggests ways to cope during crises
- **Leading in disaster recovery** is a booklet 'companion through the chaos'. It includes messages from leaders who share their experiences working in crises.
- [Red Cross webpage](#) offers some practical wellbeing tips along with links to other services, tools and information
- [Wellbeing under long term stress webpage](#)





Community support

Psychosocial support refers to the actions that address the psychosocial needs of individuals and communities, taking into consideration psychological, social and cultural aspects of wellbeing. This includes, the provision of information, practical assistance and emotional support. Red Cross provides psychosocial support for communities through Red Cross volunteers.

Psychological First Aid

Psychological first aid (PFA) is a type of psychosocial support. Red Cross volunteers are trained in PFA, an international best practice approach for helping people affected by crisis. This involves helping people to feel safe, connected to others, calm and hopeful, to access physical, emotional and social support, and to feel able to help themselves. Red Cross can provide this at community events, gatherings, information sessions or any community event where people may need or want some support.

Outreach

Outreach supports people who may not otherwise access services, information and supports available by visiting them in their homes or businesses. These services are delivered by trained volunteers who visit people to informally discuss their needs and provide psychosocial support. Given the importance of coordination, Outreach can be delivered in partnership with other agencies or include information from them.

“Having Red Cross come for a chat was far more accessible than going to a counsellor or when all you needed was someone to listen to you”.

- Resident, Blue Mountains, 2015

Contacts

This guide identifies some of our program offerings that can be adapted and contextualised to meet need. Drought Resilience Coordinators also work in states and communities supporting the linking and connection of services, organisation and individuals with one another, information and support. They advocate on the importance of psychosocial wellbeing and related community needs and can provide advice and support with related initiatives.

If you would like to know more about this work or enquire about offerings in this document, please contact our state based Drought Resilience Coordinators:

New South Wales: Mark McMullen, mcmullen@redcross.org.au

South Australia: Jasmin Piggott, jpiggott@redcross.org.au

Queensland: David Brown, dabrown@redcross.org.au

Victoria: Andrew Brick, abrick@redcross.org.au

National: Marilee Campbell, macampbell@redcross.org.au



General support, information, links and promotion from Red Cross has really helped us deliver some of our initiatives

- Community organisation committee member



Other organisation's drought resources, tools & information

For a list of drought support *services* please see [HERE](#)

For Community

National Association for Loss and Grief (NSW): [Positive Language in Drought](#)

Lifeline: [Bushfires, drought and extreme climate events toolkit](#)

Ifarmwell: [online tool kit to help farmers cope effectively with life's challenges](#)

Weathering Well: [mental health and wellbeing app](#)

You got this mate: [tips and info to help rural men reach their best possible mental health](#)

Centre for Rural and Remote Health: [drought wellbeing video, podcast and fact sheets](#)

Children and Youth

Emerging Minds: [Supporting communities during drought resources](#)

Reach Out: [Youth digital drought care package](#)

Birdie's tree: [Birdie and the drought storybook](#)

For Organisations

CRANA Plus: [Mental Health Training for health professionals in drought and bushfire affected communities](#)