



ROTARY DISTRICT 9620 DROUGHT RELIEF PROGRAM DELIVERY OF AID TO DROUGHT COMMUNITIES *OVERVIEW*

DISTRICT 9620 DROUGHT RELIEF PROGRAM

Rotary District 9620 (extending from Charleville and beyond in the west to Pimpama, Redland Bay, Caloundra and Gympie in the east) commenced its Drought Relief Program in early 2014, with a charter of improving sustainability prospects for the whole of the affected communities, not just those on the land. We are also very active in promoting emotional well-being for those enduring the extended drought.

OUR MESSAGE

While the COVID-19 pandemic has naturally gripped the attention of the world as the distribution of vaccines continues and those deeply affected by bushfires of 2019-20 are still rebuilding their lives and property, our message is to urge you to continue to support the ongoing District 9620 Drought Relief Program as it is a targeted and proven package in what remains the most long term deeply drought-affected part of Australia, with no less a need now than at any time in the last seven and a half years since our work commenced.

PROGRAM DELIVERY

The Rotary District 9620 Drought Relief Program is delivered using our “Whole of Community” approach. Aid is broken down to 3 main areas: -

1. Community Support Card System
2. Family Days
3. Rotary Reading Assistance Program

The District 9620 Program has raised in excess of \$4 million so far. Rotary Clubs and their members across Australia have been major supporters. Many donations have also come from charitable institutions, non-Rotary clubs and private sponsors, including \$500,000 through the 2018 Channel 9 appeal, which raised over \$10 million, and almost \$1.2 million from the Federal Government drought package of \$30 million. We are most grateful for this generosity and sincerely acknowledge and thank those who have given to the fund, whatever the amount. All funds raised are used in the provision of aid to drought-affected landholders and their communities. There are no costs, hidden or otherwise.

TO DONATE

To donate to the Rotary District 9620 Drought Relief Program there are two options – with or without a tax deduction.

Donate through RAWCS (Rotary Australia World Community Service) – obtain a tax deduction; there is a charge of 2.5%:

<https://donations.rawcs.com.au/Default.aspx?ProjectID=762&ReturnTo=4> (RAWCS Project No: 59-2013-14)

Donate direct to the District Fund – no tax deduction and no charges:

Rotary District 9620 Drought Appeal

St George Bank BSB 114 879 Account No. 447 875 989

Reference: “Drought Relief – Club or individual’s name” Email advice: Tim@horizongroup.com.au

OR by cheque payable to “D9620 Drought Relief” and post to Tim Davis PO Box 631, Toowoomba Qld 4350

Direct donations can be earmarked for particular localities if preferred.

RELIEF FOCUS

The Rotary Clubs of Roma, Mitchell, St George, Chinchilla and Charleville are the front line of our efforts. For example, Rotary Charleville has an area of 11% of Queensland under their wing, reportedly the most deeply drought-affected part of the State and into its ninth year of drought.

These clubs are working within the local communities to deliver relief, using ‘Third Parties’ to identify recipients. This takes the onus off individual Rotarians and Clubs to personally identify people in need, adding a level of anonymity and more importantly governance. Third Party involvement is mainly through the Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS), but also organisations such as the Charleville Neighbourhood Centre. RFCS Counsellors are front line, able to identify potential recipients through their files and day to day contact with rural property owners. Aid is only distributed to owner-operated properties.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT CARD SYSTEM

District 9620 developed the "Voucher System" for delivery of aid to Drought Affected Rural Property owners through purchases at local business using redeemable vouchers. This system has set the model for financial relief to rural towns and communities across Australia ever since.

In 2019, our District adapted the Voucher System into the digital age by introduction of plastic gift cards only redeemable on EFTPOS terminals at the recipient's local business houses through use of "closed loop" zone technology. This move has been well received for providing an improved level of anonymity for recipients as well as lessening the level of paperwork required from businesses.

The Community Support Card system works generally as follows:

1. Rotary, thanks to its supporting donors, finances batches of Community Support Cards for each local business zone e.g. Balonne Shire.
2. Third Party e.g. RFCS identifies needy recipients through its files or questionnaires. Rotary takes no part in this dispassionate identification.
3. Rotary provides numbered Community Support Cards to be forwarded to recipients by the Third Party.
4. Recipient then attends local businesses and makes purchases over a period of time to the total value of the Community Support Card.
5. Business receives direct credit from each purchase (cash in the bank!).

WHOLE OF COMMUNITY

The Rotary relief effort is designed to assist not only farmers and graziers severely drought-affected but to also to provide relief to their local communities. An early decision was made to avoid getting involved in sending "stuff" to the drought-affected, since "stuff" can be detrimental to local businesses as the goods are brought in and not purchased locally. These businesses are also suffering and most are carrying debt with little or no support. This matches the Rotary ethos of sustainability – doing what we can for the "WHOLE OF COMMUNITY".

It has been said that funds spent locally will circulate within the small community some 5 to 7 times before leaching out. This means that each \$50 spent locally effectively converts to over \$250.00 worth of benefit. We have received many testimonials from affected property owners and local businesses praising this initiative and our support for their local communities.

FAMILY DAYS

A serious problem of suicide and mental health issues in drought areas has been identified, especially amongst younger folk. To help combat this, Clubs have run a series of "Family Days" where the small local community can come together and share in a relaxed no cost environment. These are held in the local community hall, sporting club or similar, often supported by local businesses. Whole of community is invited, not just the local property owners. Entertainment, "pampering stations", activities and games for the children are included, as well as a BBQ and drinks for all. Participants are encouraged to mingle with each other and generally share their experiences.

ROTARY READING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (RRAP)

Young children in drought affected areas are sent an age appropriate book each month 'address personalised'. At present there are 125 on the roll, waiting eagerly each month for "THEIR" book. The majority of books are donated by Rotary Clubs and postage costs are met by the fund.

ADOPT-A-COMMUNITY

More recently, our District has introduced an "Adopt-a-Community" scheme, in which city-based clubs and organisations are encouraged to develop working partnerships with rural communities using supportive principles aimed at creating real benefit. Contact us for more details.

CURRENT FUNDRAISING AND THE FUTURE

Donations continue to be received, including sometimes from unlikely sources across Australia. Our District will endeavour to be allocated any funds available, in recognition of the ongoing need in our area and our track record of successful distribution and governance.

MORE INFORMATION

Contact:

Neil Black, Past District Governor
District Drought Relief Program Committee Chair
droughtrelief@rotary9620.org
mob 0408246815

Wendy Byron
District Drought Relief Program Committee Secretary
droughtrelief@rotary9620.org
mob 0421202603

Bryan Payne
Rotary Club of Roma
bpayne@ozemail.com.au
mob 0427379909