



Edition 1. March 2019

1. Financial Support.

Funds as at March 1st, 2019

- Balwyn Rotary Club - \$50,000;
- RAWCS - \$35,000;
- North Balwyn Rotary - \$10,000;
- Xavier College - \$5,000;
- Kerang Rotary Club - \$1,100

Total - \$101,100.

Expenditure as at March 1st, 2019

- Vouchers value – 800 x \$50 vouchers = \$40,000.

At the February 2nd Harvest Festival, the Voucher Program was launched to the St Arnaud and surrounds farming community. These vouchers are being distributed by a team of 5 Rural Financial Counsellors who have an intimate knowledge of each of the target audience farming families. The names of those families in receipt of the vouchers will remain anonymous.

January/February is the harvest period which provides an income to fortunate farmers. Within our catchment area of the Wimmera, weather patterns have been localised providing financial relief for some sectors but no short term funds for other areas. May is the commencement of the cropping period that requires a large investment of crops by farmers to secure an income in the next harvest period.



Our focus to date has been establishing funds and infrastructure. These funds and processes are now in place in readiness for the anticipated demand towards the middle of this year. To date only 8 vouchers have been distributed due to timing issues. Over the next month, all farmers will be analysing their harvest income versus their anticipated May cropping expenses. Therefore, it is expected that from May the demand for vouchers to cover the shortfall of finances for these families will begin to peak.



2. Well Being

Rotary has forged a strong relationship with ladies groups across Victoria to provide farmers with fabric bags that conceal confidential financial information. Self-respect is a real and important consideration for all of our farming community. While the bags were initially handmade as a substitute for plastic, environmentally unfriendly purposes, the fabric bags are made from donated fabric that would otherwise be destined for landfill.



On February 14th, Rotary collected over 510 handmade bags to distribute to our farming communities in Victoria and southern NSW. The overwhelming reaction from farmers is that of far and wide support for their plight. Women’s groups across Victoria banding together to produce handmade bags is yet another show of support for other Australians in dire need of our support.

The 510 bags were split across two projects – The Wimmera and the Riverina. In mid-February, the Wimmera township of Donald, hosted an event for a few hundred farmers to meet with financial services groups to discuss their own personal circumstances and address the void between their cash flow income from the just completed harvest and the costs of upcoming May cropping. Farmers were extremely happy with the Community Bags to conceal personal documentation whilst they were surprised by the support of women’s groups across the state.

In the Riverina, the Community Bags were utilised to support The Big Community Muster which was a Rotary initiative to provide coping strategies, based around resilience and financial support. The attached photos were taken at Scone which was at the end of the 11 town muster in only 6 days.

A range of Community events are planned for the balance of 2019. Aimed at providing a reason to come to town and leave the woes of the farm behind, the events will be collaborated through various support groups including the Rotary clubs of North Balwyn, Balwyn and St Arnaud, The Young Farmers’ Association, The Victorian Farmers’ Federation, Red Cross, The Salvation Army et al.



The Big COMMUNITY MUSTER
6 Days - 11 Locations
Sunday 24 February - Friday 1 March 2019

JOIN US: Rural health check-in

Meet the Speakers

2019 Policy 27 February
Information for you and your community

Location	Date	Time	Speaker
Ballarat	24 Feb	10:00 AM	Dr. Alison Cooper
Bendigo	24 Feb	10:00 AM	Dr. Alison Cooper
Geelong	24 Feb	10:00 AM	Dr. Alison Cooper
Melbourne	24 Feb	10:00 AM	Dr. Alison Cooper
Shepparton	24 Feb	10:00 AM	Dr. Alison Cooper
Traralgon	24 Feb	10:00 AM	Dr. Alison Cooper
Warrnambool	24 Feb	10:00 AM	Dr. Alison Cooper
Wodonga	24 Feb	10:00 AM	Dr. Alison Cooper
Ballarat	25 Feb	10:00 AM	Dr. Alison Cooper
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Comedy Festival

With a yet to be confirmed date in June, the comedy festival will be the first of these events held in the St Arnaud town centre. The comedy evening will comprise a number of sites aimed at various age groups around the Town Hall precinct with the primary, adult event in the 384 seating Town Hall auditorium.

A Rotary sub-Committee has met for an initial meeting together with the Australian Comedy Institute (ACI) to discuss scope and logistics.

Further events planned for July and August will be “Christmas in July” and the “Rock Legends” event.

Christmas in July

The Rotary Men’s Shed of North Balwyn have started plans to make a range of hand-made children’s toys.

A “Target 500 Books’ drive has commenced to provide the children of the Wimmera with books and CDs.

Rotary’s DIK (“Donations In Kind”) are currently investigating the donation of bikes.

L’Oreal will be providing the ladies of the Wimmera with 150 x Pamper Packs as a Christmas gift.

Christmas gifts for men folk is yet to be determined.

Rock Legends

While the date is yet to be determined, the event is expected to be a Saturday evening in August. The “Red Band” has agreed to participate pro-bono that will include the lead singer, renowned impersonator Phil Pitt, performing the hits of Elvis Presley, Billy Idol, Meatloaf and Neil Diamond. Accommodation costs will be covered by the DRF.

Our committee sincerely thanks all of our stakeholders for their generous financial support and we warmly welcome your on-going active support across the myriad of on-the-ground tasks required to run the well-being activities.

Geoff Kneale

Chairman

Drought Relief Fund.