

Role of Rotary DCSI contacts

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Drought Community Support Initiative (DCSI)

On 26 October 2018, the Australian Government announced it would provide \$30 million in much-needed support to drought-affected families through the DCSI. This will provide up to \$3,000 in assistance to at least 10,000 households in 81 Local Government Areas eligible under the [Drought Communities Programme](#) Extension.

The funding is now available for farmers, farm workers and farm suppliers/contractors facing hardship due to drought. It can be used to spend in local communities or to cover urgent bills such as food, petrol and utilities. The \$3,000 per household can consist of up to \$2,000 in cash and \$1,000 in vouchers¹.

The Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul Society and Rotary Australia World Community Service have been engaged to deliver the assistance. Eligible households should reach out to these organisations directly to seek financial support (details below).

The Salvation Army

24 hour hotline: 1300 551 030

Website: salvos.org.au/drought

St Vincent de Paul Society

Hotline: 13 18 12

Website: vinnies.org.au

Rotary Australia World Community Service

Website: rawcs.org.au

The program guidelines for the Drought Community Support Initiative are available at <https://regional.gov.au/regional/programs/drought-communities.aspx>

Comment

The above information was provided by the Commonwealth Government. The following comments are mine:

- At drought times in Australia, **Commonwealth** drought assistance focusses on people to ensure they have access to food, water, energy, medical supplies, and school supplies for children; **NSW government** drought assistance focusses on stock (feed and transport), farm infrastructure and drought proofing.
- The intention of the Commonwealth Drought Communities Support Initiative (DCSI) is to provide help for farmers, farm workers and farm suppliers/contractors facing hardship due to drought, particularly for things like food, petrol and utilities.

¹ RAWCS may use open debit cards for the \$2000 component and local gift cards for the \$1000 component.

- A DCSI \$3000 benefit may go a long way towards covering household expenses, but will go nowhere near covering the cost of stock feed (hay and grain) for working farms, or carting water for stock. We should be clear that it is not the intention of the DCSI to help with those things.
- Using a DCSI \$3000 benefit to purchase farm supplies including stock food and water does not seem to be prohibited by Commonwealth guidelines, but nor is it the intended purpose.
- For NSW government funded programs designed to assist with fodder, water, the transport of fodder and stock, improvements to farm drought resilience & farm infrastructure improvement see <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/droughthub/drought-assistance>
- We should draw a line at approving the DCSI \$3000 benefit if it becomes clear that the intended use is for capital improvements such as fencing, construction of new buildings, or purchase of machinery: those are clearly costs of doing business, not household expenses.

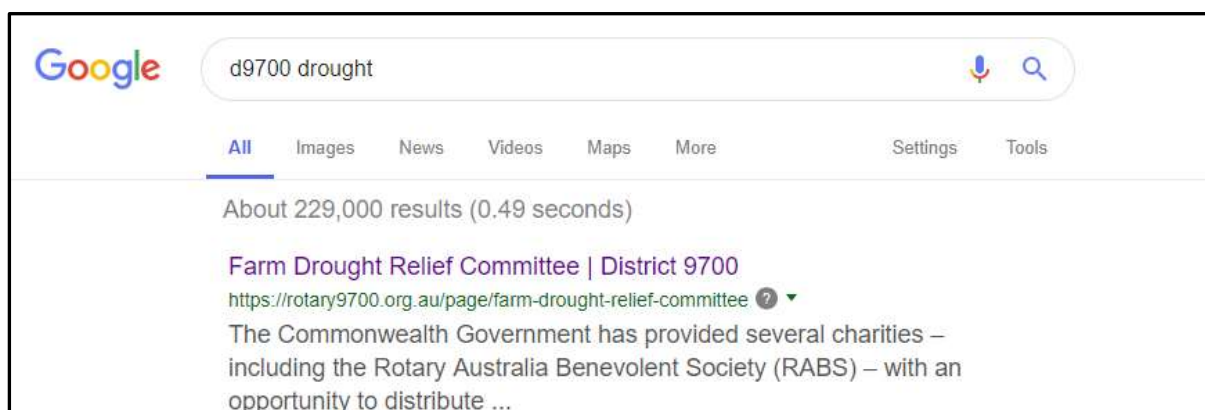
Roles of Rotary Drought Community Support Initiative (DCSI) contacts

To enable clubs in drought declared local government areas (LGAs) to be effective at communicating with farmers that they may qualify for a \$3000 benefit, I would like to identify one person in each club to be a DCSI contact and work with me on the project.

The role of DCSI contacts² is use community networks to identify farmers, farm workers and farm contractors/suppliers that may be eligible to apply for a DCSI \$3000 benefit, and encourage or help them complete the Rotary online application form.

To access the online application form is to follow these steps:

- 1 Type into your web browser (e.g. Google) "D9700 drought". You should get this screen:



² It is preferred that DCSI contacts are Rotarians, but that is not compulsory. In the absence of a Rotarian able to fill the role, someone like a council employed drought support worker may volunteer and be approved.

2. Click on [Farm Drought Relief Committee | District 9700](#)

You should see this page:

Joint Districts 9700 - 9710 Drought Relief Committee

Rotary

HOUSEHOLD ASSISTANCE APPLICATION

Online Application

Instructions for Application Form

click here for form

click here for instructions

3. Click "On line Application" and it will take you the form.
- Click "Instructions for Application Form" for instructions.

Alternative ways of submitting an application

Where an applicant does not have access to a computer:

1. The applicant may complete the form using a smartphone in much the same way as they would complete it using a computer
2. A Rotarian may complete the online form on behalf of an applicant either when face-to-face with the applicant or via telephone
3. An applicant may complete a hand written form and mail it to

Rotary
PO Box 145
Parkes, NSW 2870

DCSI networks

Ways of identifying households that may be eligible for a DCSI \$3000 benefit have been canvassed. Media campaigns and public advertising have been considered and not pursued. The concern is that such campaigns may attract a lot of applications from ineligible households and people that will still have to be processed, and distract from identifying real hardship cases that may not come forward.

To be very blunt, there are likely to be people out there distressed or depressed by the impact of drought, but too embarrassed or proud to come forward for and seek help; they could possibly choose to suicide as a way out. It is such people that Rotary particularly wants to contact and assist through the Commonwealth DCSI.

Our advice is that we are far more likely to identify such people through local networks than through sophisticated media or social media campaigns. In fact **the Commonwealth has prohibited** organisations like RAWCS **publicly advertising the availability of the DCSI benefit.**

We have therefore embarked on a strategy to identify in Rotary clubs in drought declared LGAs a person prepared to be a DCSI contact: someone prepared to network with local people and organisations to identify households that could be eligible for the DCSI benefit, and encourage them to apply.

Building a network

The following people and organisations may be useful contacts for forming a network:

- Fellow Rotarians
- Rural accountants
- Drought support workers employed by local government
- Local government councillors
- Senior officers of local government
- Rural counsellors
- Stock and station agents
- Veterinarians
- Produce and farm supply merchants
- Ministers of religion
- Practicing psychologists and counsellors
- Australia Post contractors on country routes
- Agronomists

People like rural counsellors, ministers of religion and psychologists for reasons of privacy will not be able to give you a list of names or directly identify households. However, if they know you are a

Rotary DCSI contact and what your role is they may be able give someone facing hardship your contact details, or ask permission to pass their contact details on to you.

Approval process for the DCSI benefit

Rotary DCSI contacts are not delegated authority to either refuse to accept an application, or to approve or reject an application.

If a DCSI contact was to refuse to accept an application on the basis of ineligibility, it is possible they could be mistaken and the opportunity to collect details from the applicant lost. For example, suppose someone from Juneé LGA wants to submit an application and are told not to because Juneé has not been drought declared. Then, suppose that a week later Juneé is drought declared. If the form had been lodged, by the time it reached the review committee the applicant may have been eligible.

A further reason for Rotarian DCSI contacts not being delegated authority to approve applications is to keep some distance between those that facilitate the application process and those that make decisions. If Rotarian DCSI contacts make decisions they may end up being seen as biased where they do not approve applications, or as exercising nepotism where an applicant is an acquaintance, friend or relative. Maintaining separation and making decisions based on documents represents good corporate governance and provides a useful audit trail (we are dealing with Commonwealth Government money).

DCSI contacts may, however, be able to comment on an application where they can provide evidence that could inform decision making. To that end the following recommendation would be unhelpful:

"I know Bill. He's a good bloke. Recommend you approve his application."

But comments such as the following could be useful to decision makers:

"Visited the family farm on <date>. They are in poor circumstances. Not a blade of grass and dams dry. Selling or destroying stock. House tanks nearly empty – will need to buy in water for personal hygiene and drinking. Have had some help from Anglicare with food and EAPA vouchers for electricity, but they have almost no liquidity and school starts next week. They have two school age children."

"Discussed situation with <name>. Lives at the farm with wife. Adult children living away. Wife has full time employment (teacher) and <name> has some off-farm income from contracting. Situation is tight because of drought, but not desperate."

"Farm is not the family's main source of income. Things are tight. Say they will not be able to continue feeding stock if feed costs remain high and drought continues. Cost of feed is the issue, not food and essentials for the family."

"Applicant plans to use money and voucher to fund farm improvements if application is approved."

“Applicant is related to me (a brother). Declaring a conflict of interest. Cannot make a recommendation.”

DCSI contacts may not be able to make a useful recommendation simply because they do not know an applicant or their circumstances. Therefore lack of a recommendation will not be regarded as constituting a negative recommendation.

I will try to implement a system where we can inform DCSI contacts of applicants from their LGA and invite their comment. There may be a privacy issue, but it seems to me that privacy is about limiting access to private information to those that need to know. Involving DCSI contacts in the way I have described seems to meet the “need to know” criterion.

Note that the Commonwealth may audit how Rotary allocates DCSI funds. Having documents on file and a procedure that keeps decision makers at arms-length will provide evidence of a robust system of corporate governance.

The potential for audits should also sound a warning to anyone writing anything on a file: it probably won’t happen, but you should assume that anything you write could end up on the front page of a newspaper.

Local government areas eligible for the DCSI benefit

Armidale Regional	Edward River*	Narromine
(14) Bathurst Regional*	(5) Forbes	(9) Narrandera
(1) Bega Valley	Gilgandra	(7) Oberon
(2) Bland	Glen Innes Severn Shire	(8) Parkes
(3) Blayney	Gunnedah	Tamworth Regional
Brewarrina	Gwydir	Tenterfield
(11) Broken Hill	Inverell	(12) Unincorporated Far West
Bogan	(6) Lachlan	Upper Hunter
Bourke	(16) Leeton*	Uralla
(4) Cabonne	Lithgow*	Walcha
(10) Carrathool	Liverpool Plains	Walgett
Central Darling	Mid-Western Regional	Warren
Cobar	Moree Plains	Warrumbungle
Coonamble	Muswellbrook	(18) Weddin*
(15) Cowra*	(17) Murrumbidgee*	(13) Wentworth
Dubbo Regional	Narrabri	

* LGAs with an asterisk were declared eligible by the Commonwealth effective 27 March 2019.

See <https://www.business.gov.au/assistance/drought-communities-programme>

Notes:

1. “Eligible Councils were selected based on the level of need, determined using rainfall deficiency data from the Bureau of Meteorology, in conjunction with population and industry data (reliance on agriculture) to assess the overall economic impact of the drought in the region.”
2. The local government areas Broken Hill, Wentworth and the Unincorporated Far West are within the boundaries of Rotary District 9520 It has been agreed that eligible persons/households within those LGAs can apply for the DCSI benefit through the Districts

9700/9710 (D9700/9710) online form, and access Commonwealth funds that have been allocated by Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS) to D9700/9710.

Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS) Project 38

Project 38 is a RAWCS project that was set up to distribute funds raised by the National Farmers Federation/Channel 9 drought appeal. Project 38 funds are managed separately from and differently to Commonwealth DCSI funds, but we have found that the two “buckets of money” can be used in a way that is synergistic.

One Rotary club has distributed Project 38 gifts of \$500 each to around 70 farmers. Recipients were identified by referring to stock and station agents, remote mail contractors, ministers of religion, and Rotarians. If the same people were eligible for the \$3000 DCSI benefit and five other Rotary clubs achieved similar results, the districts’ DCSI grant allocation would be fully expended. However, not all Project 38 gift recipients will be eligible for the following reasons:

1. Some may not meet DCSI eligibility criteria
2. Some may have already received DCSI benefits through the Salvation Army or St Vincent de Paul³

It is also possible that farm workers and farm contractors and suppliers that were not prioritised with Project 38 money will emerge and be eligible for a \$3000 DCSI benefit.

There have been some negative comments from community members that people have received DCSI benefits that should not – in the eyes of those commenting – have received drought assistance. Such criticism is unavoidable, but we need to be aware of the potential for lower priority applications to absorb funds before we manage to identify more pressing needs. Rotary’s reputation could be damaged to some extent should that happen.

The other thing we keep being told is that some farmers desperately in need of assistance will not come forward because of pride, and sometimes because of despair and depression. Those are the people we should be trying hardest to reach. We will not reach them through advertising campaigns. We may reach them by connecting at personal levels with people in the communities they belong to.

The approach described above taken by Rotary club provides a good – albeit imperfect – model.

While Project 38 and Commonwealth DCSI funds are from different sources and managed differently, they can be used in ways that are synergistic. A club like the one described about has – through being active in Project 38 – developed a database of some 70 farmers and farm workers that may be eligible to receive a Commonwealth DCSI benefit.

If your club becomes involved you may identify someone that is eligible for a DCSI \$3000 benefit but needs help now: can’t afford to wait until May when we will begin to distribute DCSI money. If your club has applied for and received a Project 38 grant, you could help immediately with say a \$500 gift from Project 38 funds.

³ “Double dipping” is not allowed and may well be detected by means of file matching and audits by the Commonwealth government.

If your club is not familiar with how to apply for a grant from Project 38, go to the Drought Relief Committee website (<https://rotary9700.org.au/page/farm-drought-relief-committee>) and download the “Drought Relief Application and Guidelines” form.



Project Manager for Project 38

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Rotary Joint District 9700/9710 Drought Relief Committee

Family Name	Given Name	Email	Phone	Mobile
Armstrong	Phil	philaarmstrong@gmail.com		0418 259 963
Benn	David	david@davidbenn.com		0499 710 716
Conkey	Doug	doug.conkey@bigpond.com	02 6925 3039	0400 909 992
Engsmyr	Ken	ken.engsmyr@bigpond.com	02 6862 5424	0418 246 662
Finkel	Chris	elponderosa@iinet.net.au		0429 661 358
Glassford	John	jacksflat@gmail.com		0498 190 880
Hassall	Margaret	hassall.m@bigpond.com		0413 309 506
Heriot	Stuart	ladykirk2@gmail.com	02 6922 6363	
Hutchings	Tim	td.hutchings@bigpond.com	02 69263725	
McKenzie	John	jmaconsulting@gmail.com		0402 018 318
Mercer	John	john.mercer47@gmail.com		0474 792 217
Murray	Paul	grampamurray@gmail.com		0408 285 562
Post	David	david@introspective.com.au		0408 221 696
Seelis	Bill	sel4957@bigpond.net.au		0412 424 738
Woolley	Rob	robwoolley275@gmail.com		0409 549 485

Map of NSW Local Government Areas



DCSI Contacts: email addresses and phone numbers

LGA	DCSI Contact	Club	Email	Phone
1. Bathurst Regional				
2. Bega Valley	Bill Dejong	Merimbula	williamdejong@bigpond.com	0424 346982 02 6495 3878
3. Bland	Patrick Cleary	West Wyalong	digwithajig@live.com.au	02 6972 3187 0414 926 320
4. Blayney	Ian Tooke	Blayney	tookeian@yahoo.com	02 6368 2574
5. Cabonne	Paul Mullins	Molong	molongex@bigpond.net.au	02 6366 8017
6. Carrathool	Robert Manning	Narrandera	mcypress@bigpond.net.au	0428 592 553 02 6959 2555
	Roslyn Ceddia	Griffith Avanti	Roslyn.ceddia@gmail.com	0458 627 200
7. Cowra				
8. Forbes	Grahame Uphill	Forbes	dorso@westserv.net.au	0427 640 065
9. Lachlan	Sue Bennett	Condobolin	susan.bennett.travel@gmail.com	0427 002 215
10. Leeton				
11. Oberon	Lin Boswell	Oberon	lin@linboswell.com.au	02 6336 1282
12. Murrumbidgee				
13. Narrandera	Robert Manning	Narrandera	mcypress@bigpond.net.au	0428 592 553 02 6959 2555
14. Parkes	Ken Engsmyr	Parkes	ken.engsmyr@bigpond.com	02 6862 5424 0418 246 662
11. Broken Hill, Wentworth, & the Unincorporated Far West	Bruce James	Broken Hill	brucejames3@bigpond.com	0429 855 164

Deadline for applications

Originally D9700/9710 was tasked to compile a list of 333 eligible applicants by 30 April 2019 to receive the full \$1,000,000 budgeted for the two districts by RAWCS. Latest advice is that RAWCS will receive funds from the Commonwealth on 19 May.

It remains important that you encourage eligible applicants complete the on-line form, or mail a completed hard-copy form to "Rotary, PO Box 145, PARKES NSW 2870".

If we do not find 333 eligible applicants, unallocated funds will be reallocated by RAWCS.

Attachment 1: Farms in drought declared LGAs

Shire Councils in drought declared LGAs were asked to provide information about the number of farms on their rates register. A summary of information received so far:

LGA	Number of Farmland Rate Assessments:
1. Bathurst Regional	
2. Bega Valley	788
3. Bland	1,366
4. Blayney	
5. Cabonne	
6. Carrathool	898
7. Cowra	
8. Forbes	1417
9. Lachlan	1423
10. Leeton	
11. Oberon	1130
12. Murrumbidgee	
13. Narrandera	815
14. Parkes	
15. Weddin	
TOTAL REPORTED	5683
Average farms per LGA	812

A reason for requesting information from councils was to get a sense of how many farms there are within the boundaries of D9700/9710.

Not all the data is in, but based on what we have it appears there will be at least 8000 farms.

Jones⁴ (p. xvi) says “There are 135,000 farms and 157 000 farmers and graziers today and despite the increase in corporate ownership in the last 30 years, over 90% of these properties are still run by family owner-operators”.

8000 farms represent 6% of all the farms in Australia as reported by Jones who bases her estimate on Australian Bureau of Statistics data.

There is concern that D9700/9710 may not be able to fill its quota of 333 eligible applicants for the Commonwealth \$3000 benefit. Certainly organisations like St Vincent de Paul or the Salvation Army received funding in the first tranche of the DCSI and have been active in providing the benefit. Households are not permitted to receive the benefit twice, even if it comes via different organisations. But 8000 farms, a high percentage of which will have been adversely affected by the drought, plus farm workers, farm contractors and farm supplies that have been affected ...

There are likely to be more than 333 eligible applicants still out there. Our task is to find them and get them to complete an application for the benefit.

⁴ Jones R, **Slow Catastrophes: Living with drought in Australia**, Monash University Publishing, 2017

Attachment 2: RAWCS Project 38 fund distribution criteria

ROTARY DISTRICTS 9700/9710 SUBMISSION & RESPONSE TO CRITERIA

Fighting for our Farmers 2018 Drought Relief Appeal: Drought Funds Distribution Sub-Committee Statement of Principles

This statement sets out the principles guiding the distribution of funds from the *Fighting for our Farmers 2018 Drought Relief Appeal*.

Purpose: To provide short-term and targeted assistance to farmers and their families, [and regional business people and regional communities?] that provides some support to help them make longer- term decisions about their personal circumstances.

Objectives: To provide effective assistance to those in need in a timely way.

Our Delivery system.

Beneficiaries will be sourced by Third Parties mainly the **Rural Outreach Counselling Services (ROCS)** on a needs basis from their files. Other Third Parties include Country Womens Association and Local Rotary Clubs will be engaged.

Prioritised target areas of need:

		Weighting
Short term (70% funds)	Bill relief We will meet these criteria with Farmers presenting Vouchers to Farmers own Local Businesses.	Critical
	Mental Pastoral health support We will meet these criteria with Family Days. Pastoral Care Contacts will be across our two Districts.	Critical
	Water (domestic)	High
	Regional communities / businesses By the Farmers directed to expend Vouchers at Their Local Businesses and using the 'multiplier effect' it is estimated that the value of the Voucher circulates some 5 times within the community. Therefore, a Farmer presenting \$100 Voucher at his/her Local Business means some \$500 worth of value to that community before leaching out.	Medium
	Fodder & stock water (core herd)	Medium

		Weighting
Medium term	<p>Childcare / education</p> <p>By providing support to the Local Businesses through Vouchers we are keeping businesses in town with the flow on benefit of maintaining children at the schools. Should the businesses leave town (odds are they may never return) it could put school numbers and therefore teaching staff at risk. Worst case closure of School.</p>	High
(30%)	<p>Rebuild regional economies</p> <p>By keeping the business in town with farmers presenting Local Business with Vouchers this is supporting the regional economy to maintain itself through the tough times.</p>	High
	Land/animal care	Medium
	Replanting	Medium

Geographic focus:

[RAWCS will] Initially [target] NSW and QLD – monitor on monthly basis based on drought maps and feedback from RFCS and NFF members.

Our Geographic Focus is the Shires represented in our two Districts as attached.

