



Centre for Remote Health

A joint centre of Flinders University and Charles Darwin University



The Social & Health Impacts of Drought on Remote & Rural Communities

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Acknowledgement of the Gomerioi People, Traditional Custodians of the land



The Research Story

- Commissioned by Minister Bourke
- Chaired by Peter Kenny
- Expert Panel also included Mal Peters, Prof Daniela Stehlik, Barry Wakelin, Sue West & Lesley Young



TERMS OF REFERENCE

- **The social dimensions of the impacts of drought on farm families and rural communities.**
- **The objectives, extent and range of Commonwealth, state and territory governments' and non-government social support services, including counselling and advisory services, available to farm families and rural communities during periods of stress and change such as drought.**
- **Gaps in the application of Commonwealth, state and territory governments' and non-government social support services for mitigating the impacts of stress and change such as drought on farm families and rural communities.**
- **Possible social support services for mitigating the impacts of stress and change such as drought on farm families and rural communities.**



Research.

- Literature review
- Commissioned independent research & surveys
 - *HILDE Primary producer perceptions of climate risk and adaptation.*
 - *CSIRO/ BOM Assessment of the impact of climate change on the nature and frequency of exceptional climatic events*
- 25 public consultation forums across rural Australia
- Meeting with federal & state & Territory governments & non government organisations
- Public submissions (more than 230)



Drought can be experienced and hence defined in different ways.

- *Meteorological drought*: a period of months to years when atmospheric conditions result in low rainfall. This can be exacerbated by high temperatures and high evaporation, low humidity and desiccating winds;
- *Agricultural drought*: short-term dryness in the surface soil layers (root-zone) at a critical time in the growing season. The start and end may lag that of a meteorological drought, depending on the preceding soil moisture status;
- *Hydrological drought*: prolonged moisture deficits that affect surface or subsurface water supply, thereby reducing streamflow, groundwater, dam and lake levels. This may persist long after a meteorological drought has ended;
- *Socio-economic drought*: the effect of elements of the above droughts on supply and demand of economic goods and human well-being







Social impact of drought

- Observations on values, attitudes and policy
- Community
- Families
- Delivering human support services
 - education & training, human capital, health & well being
 - Planning for dryness





- **12 to 16 per cent** less likely to be satisfied with their life as a whole and their standard of living.
- **12 to 19 per cent** more likely to be satisfied with their health, personal relationships and to feel part of the community.
- People working in drought-affected areas are approximately **21 per cent** more likely to feel safe and **8 per cent** less satisfied with their spirituality or religion.
- People in drought areas were **14 per cent** less likely to feel satisfied with their future security. In this model, income, in the context of satisfaction items, explained approximately four per cent of the difference between the two groups.



Dissatisfied with their future security

- Be over 40 years of age
- Be male
- Have two adults in the household
- Not have children
- Work full time
- Have Year 11 or 12 education
- Be married
- Earn under \$30,000
- Have no post-school qualifications.



CSIRO & BOM

- Increased risk of severe drought over next 20 - 30 years compared to last 100 years
- Exacerbated by increasing temperatures



Planning for dryness

- Personal plan
- Business plan
- Succession plan
- Fall back plan
- Continuing professional development & lifelong learning
- Invest in local skills and services which will best serve those they understand









Centre for Remote Health Alice Springs.

Thank You