

Drought Support

A range of support is available from the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments for farm families and farm businesses affected by drought.

Personal Support

Don't face issues alone. Drought, fire and other natural disasters are a stressful time. Those in high-risk areas will often need to keep on alert throughout the season and monitor conditions in their surrounding area. It is normal to feel anxious during this time of year and this anxiety may be worse for people who have been affected by natural disasters and emergencies in the past. If you are in an emergency, or at immediate risk of harm to yourself or others, please contact **Emergency Services on 000**.

Your Local GP

If you are dealing with stressful events you might find it helpful to talk them over with your local GP who can refer you to other appropriate support people.

Telephone Counselling and Health Support

Telephone counselling services respond to callers with a wide range of concerns and personal emergencies. Services include:

Lifeline	13 11 14
NURSE-ON-CALL	1300 60 60 24
BeyondBlue	1300 224 636
Mensline	1300 78 99 78
Family Relationship Service	1800 050 321

Financial Support

Drought Concessional Loans

Applications are now open for the latest round of The Australian Government Drought Concessional Loans Scheme. This Scheme aims to assist Victorian farmers who are currently experiencing a significant financial impact as a result of the effect of drought. Rural Finance is the delivery agent for the Scheme in Victoria on behalf of the state government. Call 1800 260 425 or visit <http://www.ruralfinance.com.au/grants/drought-concessional-loans-scheme-2015-16>

Farm Debt Mediation

The Farm Debt Mediation scheme can assist farmers in financial difficulty, offering a low cost, independent and confidential mediation service. The scheme makes it compulsory for banks and other creditors to offer mediation to farmers before commencing debt recovery proceedings on farm mortgages.

Call 136 186 or email farm.debt@ecodev.vic.gov.au

Farm Household Allowance

The Farm Household Allowance is a Commonwealth Government initiative available to eligible farmers and their families experiencing financial hardship. The program provides a fortnightly allowance to farm households accessible through Centrelink.

Call 13 23 16 or visit <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/farm-household-allowance>

Victorian Government Concessions

Concessions are available to low income Victorians experiencing difficulty in paying their council rates, water, gas and electricity bills. For each concession and/or benefit there is an eligibility criterion.

For further information visit <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/concessions>

Rural Financial Counsellor

The Rural Financial Counselling Service provides primary producers and small rural businesses that are experiencing hardship with free and impartial financial information, options, decision-making support and referral services.

Information on the locations of rural financial counsellors in Victoria can be obtained by visiting their website <http://www.ruralfinancialcounselling.org.au/about-us/>, calling 1800 686 175 (toll free) or calling:

- North Central on (03) 5442 2424
- Wimmera South West on (03) 5572 4540
- Gippsland on (03) 5662 2566
- Goulburn Murray Hume on 1300 834 775 or (02) 6057 5777
- Murray Mallee on (03) 5022 0799

Further information on financial support is available <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farm-management/drought-preparedness/further-support>

Farm Management Deposits

Farm Management Deposits (FMDs) allow eligible primary producers to set aside pre-tax income from primary production in years of high income, which they can draw on in years of low income. The Australian Government is amending the FMD legislation to:

- double the FMD cap from \$400,000 to \$800,000
- re-establish an early access trigger during times of drought
- remove the law that prevents FMDs being used as offset accounts against primary production business debt.

For further information, contact the Australian Taxation Office on 13 28 66.

Farm Management Options

The Victorian Government provides a variety of services and information including helping farmers manage chemical use and prepare properties for emergencies such as drought and bushfires. During drought there is a high risk of losing valuable soil as ground cover reduces. Wind can blow soil away causing erosion and the loss of valuable nutrients and topsoil. Bare areas will also be more prone to washing once the rain does come. Removing stock to containment areas before ground cover drops below 70 per cent will help minimise erosion. Retaining stubbles and minimising tillage also helps prevent soil loss.

For more information call the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources customer service centre on 136 186

Climate Information

The Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources develop and communicates a number of important information products regarding climate science. The information is targeted to industry sectors and is designed to provide farm businesses with the tools and resources to support risk management and good decision making. For more information see <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farm-management/weather-and-climate> or call 136 186

Water management

Emergency water supply points

Victoria has a network of about 300 emergency water supply points which provide water for emergency stock and domestic purposes during severe dry seasonal conditions, surface water scarcity and bushfires.

Contact your local council, rural or urban water corporation for further information about Emergency Water Supply points in your area.

Further information, including an interactive map of Emergency Water Supply Points can be found here <http://delwp.vic.gov.au/water/emergency-water-supply-points>

Dams, Pumping & Carting

There are quite a few actions which can be carried-out to make available water go a little further. Here are some ideas for further development:

Dams

Fence springs, soaks and dams. Pipe water to troughs to prevent contamination and also bogging

Pump water from shallow dams to one central one to reduce evaporation losses

Build drains from any road catchments or other hard surfaces to catch water from any summer thunderstorms and channel to dams

Take the opportunity to de-sludge or deepen any empty dams

Carting

If carting from community bores or standpipes, it is better to store the water in a tank rather than a dam. This reduces seepage and evaporation losses.

Circular above-ground swimming pools are the cheapest form of temporary storage

Consider bulk cartage of water by contractors. It could well be cheaper than the do it yourself option

General

Choose the pump and pipe that best matches your requirements in order to reduce pumping costs

Check the salinity of streams and bores for salinity

When using saline water, clean troughs and uncovered tanks each week

Site any new troughs and tanks to suit future needs

The Victorian State Government publishes the *Dam Water factsheet* which includes information on how to calculate how long your dam water is likely to last.

<http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farm-management/managing-dams/how-long-will-my-dam-water-last#DEPI>

