

MOIRA SHIRE COUNCIL

**SUBMISSION TO THE DROUGHT POLICY REVIEW
SOCIAL IMPACTS OF DROUGHT**

JULY 2008



SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS and MOIRA SHIRE PRIORITIES

Possible actions to assist with the acceptance of change and the best way to maintain social structure as we know it:

The most important factor recognised by the Moira Shire to enable communities to cope with any challenge is by facilitating good mental health of individuals, families and therefore communities.

The key ways in which this can be developed, supported and enhanced by services are identified below:

- Ongoing support for Shire Community Development Officers and local initiatives such as Drought Health Promotion Grants.
- Assistance for Transition such as Exceptional Circumstances and financial assistance for Infrastructure upgrades/business adaptation to develop sustainable and self reliant businesses.
- Ongoing support for the Moira FoodShare
- Assistance for Rural Shires to diversify their economic, industrial and therefore employment bases so that they are less vulnerable to any climatic variation.

SHIRE DEFINITION

- The Moira Shire encompasses 4,057 square kilometres of which more than two thirds is used for agriculture. Agriculture is the predominant industry of the shire. Approximately 28,300 people live within the Moira Shire in twenty-four townships. Many of these towns are dependent on irrigated agriculture.
- The Moira Shire has dropped 26 points on the SIEFA Index of disadvantaged between the 2001 and 2006 census periods. From the 2001 Census collection it was ranked the twenty-ninth most disadvantaged region. After the 2006 Census collection the Moira Shire had declined to the 22nd most disadvantaged region.

BACKGROUND

- The water resource situation remains very grim with storages in the upper catchment only slightly better off than this time last year and an initial allocation of 0%
- Milk production has dropped in this region of Northern Victoria by 11% compared with same time last year.
- There are currently 868 cases in the Moira Shire receiving Centrelink Drought Payments and this equates to 33% of properties.
- In 2007/08 there was a total of 1318 individual claims processed for the municipal rate subsidy, this equates to over \$822, 000.00 (note that the subsidy is valued at 50% of the bill) and was well up from any previous experience.

SUPPORT OF MOIRA SHIRE KEY POINTS

Community Development Officers and local initiatives:

- In the past two years 48% of successful applications (equating to 48% of \$ delivered) to the Moira Shire Drought Health Promotion grants were directly involved with community groups that benefit from the support of a Community Development Officer. They were established and supported groups so were well positioned to respond to difficult circumstances. This does not include the Community and Events grants that are available from Moira Shire.
- Approximately \$50,000.00 has been distributed within the Moira Shire since 2006. This money has supported 53 different community events ranging from Christmas BBQ's for hundreds of people, to assisting in the construction of a community garden for the ongoing benefit of residents.
- The Womens' Health Group North East support this by stating "drought workers are vital to keep other agencies programs accessible through their networking and communication roles and their direct contact with the community and that social inclusion is a key to managing change in our communities".

Assistance for Transition:

- On going declaration of Exceptional Circumstance is required to enable time for adaptation and transition. Infrastructure upgrades are required, as is the development of new management techniques/systems and business planning. This can promote preparedness and self reliance in a defined time frame.
- Infrastructure improvements provide options for Farm Management Systems. Examples of such as restructuring farms to be less dependent on irrigation as well as improved feeding systems to decrease reliance on pasture production.

Moira FoodShare:

- Moira Foodshare supports Berrigan, Corowa, Campaspe Strathbogie and Moira Shires and during 2007 delivered 62958 meals to families which is an average of 5246 meals per month. Last month this figure jumped to 7959 meals.
- Moira Foodshare is currently experiencing difficulties accessing supply. This is due to a decrease in donations and an increase in competition for goods.

Diversify Shire foundation:

- Figures from the 2006 census indicated that 20.5% of the employed persons in the Moira Shire are employed in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing. This is compared to 9.9% in the Hume region and 2.8% of all Victorians.

