

Central Highlands Agricultural Flood Recovery

Newsletter #01 09/02/22

Moorabool Shire, Hepburn Shire and City of Ballarat's farming communities were hit by a storm and flood event on 5-6 January 2022. This is the third major weather event that the three LGAs have experienced since June last year. These weather events are normally considered a '1 in 100 years' occurrence.

We are facing a significant agricultural loss, with severe flooding to many crops, not to mention contaminated dams, hail damage, washed away topsoil, fly-blown stock and more. Over 2,000 hectares of farming land has been impacted so far, with assessments ongoing to identify the full extent of the damage across the three Shires. Crops impacted include potatoes, pyrethrum, cereal crops, wheat, barley, lucerne, rape crops, turnips, beans, broccoli, cabbage, but there are many more. The dollar value of crops lost reaches into the tens of millions.

Councils are working alongside Agriculture Victoria to assist all farmers in this difficult recovery journey. We would like to acknowledge and thank you for your continued resilience in the face of this severe threat to your livelihood. If you haven't already, please reach out to your local Council who can guide you through the available support.

Moorabool Shire Council
Ph: (03) 5366 1323

Hepburn Shire Council
Ph: (03) 4373 7373

City of Ballarat
Ph: (03) 5320 5500



Shredded crops and paddocks near Creswick

Agriculture Victoria's support and call for farmer input into activities

Agriculture Victoria is working with primary producers, landholders, industry and local government to assess the loss and damages as a result of the storm.

The Agriculture Recovery Team is supporting affected communities, providing technical advice and information as well as referrals to other organisations including the Rural Financial Counselling Service as well as business, mental health and wellbeing support services.

Agriculture Victoria has appointed a local Agriculture Recovery Manager who is working with the community to assess their impact of the storm and to determine what other support could potentially be provided.



We are planning activities for the coming weeks to support farmers as they manage the recovery process. These will focus on issues such as managing sedimentation in dams and grazing stubble, spoiled hay and repairing dam wall damage, as well as financial advice, mental health and wellbeing.

We are keen to hear from landholders who were affected by the storm as to the activities and advice they would like provided in the coming weeks and months.

Proposed activities include a drop-in center in Creswick in early February, this information session will include information on managing livestock health of in the current conditions, including the risks associated with grazing stubbles soon after harvest with the amount of spilled grain. This session will also include a short presentation on performing a dam safety check.

To register for activities or request other specialist advice, fill in the following short form: <https://forms.office.com/r/HpZg6CYBpZ> or using the QR Code

One-on-one support is available to assist farmers to manage the recovery process. Please contact the Agriculture Recovery Team on 0427 694 185 or email recovery@agriculture.vic.gov.au for more information.

Information on managing storm or flood recovery can be found at agriculture.vic.gov.au/floodrecovery

Personal Hardship Assistance Program

Department Families, Fairness & Housing (formerly DHS) has available payments for affected residents to assist with recovery from emergency events.

The Personal Hardship Assistance Program provides assistance to people experiencing financial hardship in meeting their relief needs because of a single house fire or a natural disaster related emergency such as bushfire, flood, severe storm or earthquake.

The Personal Hardship Assistance Program provides two forms of emergency financial assistance:

1. Emergency Relief Assistance to meet the immediate relief needs of families/individuals.
2. Emergency Re-establishment Assistance to help families/individuals re-establish a principal place of residence.

Find out more: <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/personal-hardship-assistance-program>

Emergency relief assistance

A one-off payment is provided to eligible people to help meet immediate needs, including emergency food, shelter, clothing, medication and accommodation.

This payment is generally paid within seven days of an emergency event.

Emergency re-establishment assistance

Emergency re-establishment assistance payments may be available in addition to emergency relief payments.

There are strict eligibility criteria for this payment, including:

- Must be principal place of residence
- Property or contents are not insured
- Meet income thresholds

The payments are used for:

- clean-up
- emergency accommodation
- repairs
- rebuilding (a principal place of residence)
- replacing some damaged contents.

Payments can be provided in a number of ways, including via direct debit transfer into your nominated bank account, or by a physical card.

If you've been recently impacted by natural disaster incidents, such as storms, floods and fires, contact your local council to discuss your needs and relief supports available.



Creswick floods in the Hepburn Shire
Photo credited to : Cmdr Wayne Rigg FRV.



Storm cleanup in Gardiner Street, Hepburn Shire



Storm damage at the Creswick Primary School

Flood-affected farmers encouraged to reach out to Rural Aid

Rural Aid counsellors and community representatives are supporting farmers in the Central Highlands, in the wake of freak storms and floods.

Rural Aid counsellor Sue Jensen has been on the ground in Creswick and Dean, talking to farmers and viewing damaged crops.

"Sadly, dozens of farmers had their crops badly damaged earlier this year," Ms Jensen said.

"Hundreds of hectares of potatoes, canola and pyrethrum have either been wiped out, or have rotted in the wet conditions.

"It's a tough time for these farmers, who've already been up against it with storm recovery from previous weather events as well as pandemic and supply chain challenges."

Rural Aid is Australia's most trusted rural charity and provides critical support to farmers affected by natural disaster through financial, wellbeing and fodder assistance.

Rural Aid also offers domestic water deliveries, bundles of fence posts, and a Farm Army platform that connects farmers with volunteers and workers.

Ms Jensen said Rural Aid's free counselling service is specially tailored for primary producers and their family members.

"We catch up with farmers where they're most comfortable," Ms Jensen said.

"That can be on-farm, in town, or over the phone. One of the best places to chat is at the kitchen table over a cuppa. It doesn't need to be anything formal; it's really just a chance to listen and talk."

"Having a chat when you're going through a tough time can make a real difference and take a huge weight off your shoulders."

Primary producers are encouraged to register with Rural Aid to access the full suite of services provided.

Farmers can register at www.ruralaid.org.au or by calling 1300 327 624.

Sue Jensen, Rural Aid's counsellor for the Central Highlands, can be contacted on 0460 313 207.



*For our mates
in the bush*



Rural Aid inspects damaged crops



Farm damage in Hepburn Shire

Farm Household Allowance

This program aims to provide targeted assistance that gives farming families practical support to assess their situation and plan a way forward to long-term financial security. It is an Australian Government support package that's available to eligible farmers and their partners experiencing financial hardship.

FHA can be paid to farmers and their partners up to a maximum of four cumulative years (1,460 days of payment) within the specific 10-year period while they take action to address their long-term financial security.

To find out if you can apply, visit <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/farm-household-allowance>

Recovery grants for primary producers impacted by 9-10 June storm

Were you also impacted by the 9-10 June storm event in 2021? You may be eligible for this grant opportunity.

The maximum amount available for this program is \$25,000 and the money will go towards clean-up and recovery activities needed to reinstate primary production enterprises.

To apply or to see if you're eligible, visit <https://www.ruralfinance.com.au/industry-programs/victorian-floods-andstorms-clean-up-and-restoration-grants>

Free fence posts thanks to Rural Aid

Primary producers from Hepburn Shire and Moorabool Shire are able to order one kilometre of free fence posts to aid in the recovery from the June 2021 storm and flood event. Unfortunately, this initiative was created in 2021 and impacted primary producers from City of Ballarat are not currently eligible. If you'd like to discuss this further, please call Bill Cook, Municipal Emergency Manager at City of Ballarat on 0447 109 877.

The fence posts are made from storm-damaged timber. It is repurposed from green waste obtained over the course of the clean-up program.

The initiative is facilitated by Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV) who has partnered with Rural Aid and six local government areas affected by the June 2021 storm. To partake in this program, please address the following criteria.

Eligibility:

- ABN and supporting documentation to prove Primary Producer status in one of the six local government areas (Hepburn, Macedon Ranges, Moorabool, Yarra Ranges, Murrindindi, Cardinia).
- Register with Rural Aid

Find details and submit an Expression of Interest at <http://faa.ruralaid.org.au/fence-post-program/>



Hepburn
SHIRE COUNCIL

STORM
RECOVERY

Community Recovery Session

Join us at a community session as Dr Rob Gordon discusses your journey towards recovery from the January 2022 storm.

When: Wednesday 23rd Feb

Where: Doug Lindsay Recreation Reserve, Creswick

Time: 6 pm

To register go to - <https://www.hepburn.vic.gov.au/storm-update/> or call Customer Experience on 03 5348 2306



Rob Gordon, Ph.D is a Clinical Psychologist and has worked with survivors of traumatic events, disasters, work related critical incidents for 40 years. He has been a consultant to the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, Bushfire Recovery Victoria, The Victorian Department of Education and Training and the Emergency Services Department of Australian Red Cross for emergencies and traumatic events. He has worked with communities affected by disasters throughout Australia and New Zealand and consults to a range of agencies supporting people affected by trauma and grief; he provides training to many government and non-government agencies and has published articles and book chapters on trauma and grief. He is the President of the Australian Confederation of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapies and conducts a psychotherapy practice in Box Hill, Victoria.