



RURAL  
(aid)  
AUSTRALIA  
1300 327 624  
ruralaid.org.au  
Supporting  
farmers & rural  
communities

# IMPACT REPORT

2023  
2024



# ANNUAL SUMMARY

The financial year 2023-2024 has been a pivotal period for Rural Aid, underscoring its unwavering commitment to supporting farmers and rural communities across Australia. Despite numerous challenges posed by adverse weather events and fluctuating market conditions, farmers have demonstrated remarkable resilience and strength.

In February 2024, Rural Aid conducted our comprehensive “Pulse of the Paddock” survey to capture the thoughts and sentiments of farmers on a variety of crucial topics. The survey provided valuable insights that have been shared throughout this impact report. The survey also offered valuable feedback from farmers and rural communities.

During this year, Rural Aid delivered more than \$5m in support of farmers and rural communities. Reflecting on an impactful year, Rural Aid remains dedicated to its mission of providing critical assistance to those affected by natural disasters.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our supporters and donors. Your generosity and commitment enable us to provide critical assistance and resources to those in need. We look forward to your continued support in making a lasting difference in the lives of Australian farmers and rural communities.

*delivering more than*  
**\$5m**

**IN SUPPORT TO  
FARMERS & RURAL  
COMMUNITIES**

*Our commitment to supporting farmers and rural communities is unwavering, and we are prepared to continue this vital work in the face of future challenges.*

**JOHN WARLTERS  
CEO | RURAL AID**





# OUR IMPACT

2024 marks a year since Rural Aid refreshed its Theory of Change (TOC) and measurement framework. Feedback from various indicators has shown that the support provided by Rural Aid over the last 12 months has been both relevant and positively received by farmers.

Reflecting on this journey, we've realised how Rural Aid's holistic approach has strengthened our mission. We have already witnessed the early signs of long-term positive outcomes, though the framework has only been in place for a year.

The framework has provided invaluable insights, emphasising the need to tailor our support to the diverse needs of rural communities. Our TOC recognises that achieving desired outcomes, such as reducing financial stress and improving mental wellbeing, is not a straightforward journey. It can involve a complex, non-linear process that requires continuous adaptation and responsiveness to the unique challenges faced by each farming family and community. As we refine our approach, we remain committed to fostering resilience and self-sufficiency among farmers and their communities. We are continually evaluating our framework to ensure that our support remains effective and impactful.

*We're incredibly proud of this year's progress and excited for the journey ahead, continuing to support and empower our farmers and rural communities.*

**ALEX HUTTON**  
CHAIR | RURAL AID





# OUR DEFINED OUTCOMES

## 1 SHORT TERM OUTCOMES

- o Immediate needs for farmers are rapidly identified
- o Support and resources appropriately distributed - right support at right time
- o Distress is reduced (financial and psychological)
- o More people proactively seek support
- o Community needs and strengths, and their long-term vision and priorities are well understood
- o Community has strengthened social networks to connect with and support each other
- o Communities feel engaged in planning for long-term renewal

## 2 MEDIUM TERM OUTCOMES

- o Improved wellbeing and peace of mind
- o Farmer and communities more comfortable to talk about mental health
- o People have the tools and support to cope and recover
- o Farmers and communities have access to expertise and are aware of support options available
- o People feel supported and cared for by the wider community
- o Communities work together to implement plans
- o Communities develop strong and trusted relationships

## 3 LONG TERM OUTCOMES

- o Hope for the future
- o Farmers and communities are proactive in preparing for and reducing the impact associated with natural disasters
- o Farmers and communities are capable of managing their own response and recovery
- o Farmers and communities feel empowered to identify and implement solutions that allow them to overcome their challenges



# VISION & MISSION

## VISION

Farming and rural communities are safeguarded to ensure their sustainability before, during and after natural disasters.

## MISSION

To provide economic and empathic assistance to rural communities impacted by natural disaster by partnering with key stakeholders to deliver meaningful outcomes.

# DISASTER ASSISTANCE



RURAL AID  
SUPPORT  
TEAM





# DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Across the country, farmers and communities have faced rapidly changing climatic conditions. This year brought both wet and dry periods, with each posing their own unique but significant challenges. Western Australia, South Australia, and the East Coast experienced dry conditions early in the year, while parts of the East Coast faced increased rainfall later, highlighting the diverse climatic challenges faced by farmers.

This year, **Rural Aid** has supported numerous communities through cascading disasters. For instance, state-wide storms in Victoria caused significant damage, particularly in Gippsland, where farmers experienced bushfires one day and overnight were faced with multiple flooding events. Rural Aid provided initial bushfire and flood support and continued assistance throughout recovery and subsequent disaster events as we worked closely with these impacted families.

**Rural Aid's Farm Recovery** events, supported by staff and volunteers, have helped farming communities such as Tara, Qld and Willawarrin, NSW. These rural areas have weathered years of challenging conditions. While practical recovery support is vital, the impact of these events goes beyond this as the mental health benefits of being cared for by the wider community are equally significant. By purchasing project materials locally, securing paid accommodation for volunteers, and partnering with local groups for meals, **Rural Aid** injects valuable funds into these communities, further strengthening their local economy.

*At Rural Aid, we recognise the complexity of disasters, understanding that farmers and communities may simultaneously recover from one disaster while preparing for another.*

*Rural Aid is active in all stages of the disaster lifecycle, extending support beyond the initial response to long-term recovery.*

**SHARON NOVAK**  
DISASTER ASSISTANCE  
MANAGER | RURAL AID





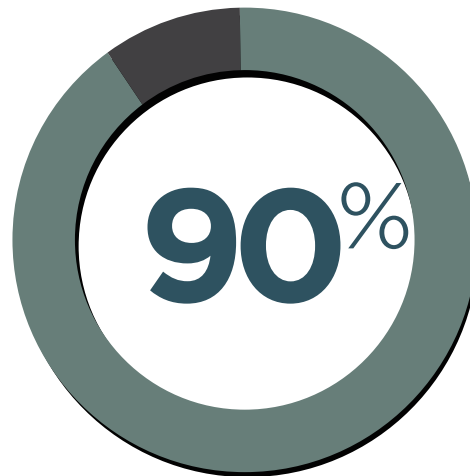
# DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Fodder

RURAL AID | 2023-2024 | IMPACT REPORT

over  
**6200**  
BALES

assisting  
**364**  
FARMS/FAMILIES



**of farmers agree**  
that receiving hay  
from Rural Aid reduced their  
financial stress

*We are so grateful to you guys for organising such fantastic quality hay and the local hay supplier was very grateful for the business.*

**FARMER**  
SOUTH WEST  
QUEENSLAND







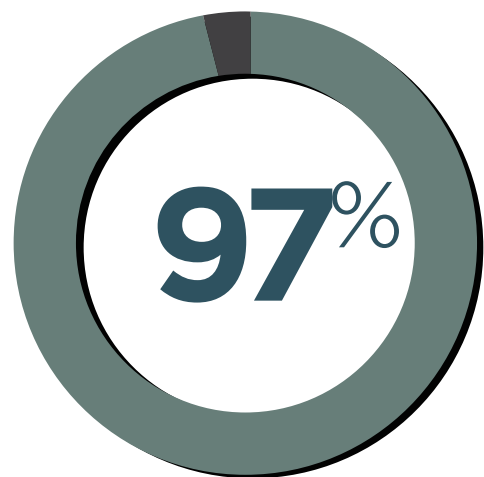
# DISASTER ASSISTANCE

## Domestic Water & Infrastructure

**11m**  
LITRES OF  
**DRINKING WATER**  
*delivered*

**10**  
**HYDROPANELS**  
*to support*  
**CLEAN WATER ACCESS**  
**IN RURAL SCHOOLS**

**198**  
**DOMESTIC**  
**WATER TANKS**  
*delivered*



**97%**  
**of farmers agree**  
that water tanks allowed their household to  
better manage future natural disasters &  
shortages

*Now we have the Rural Aid tank, we have effectively doubled our water capacity.*

*I'm confident this will take one of our worries away, well and truly. It's a massive threat that has been removed, not only because we can see the tank sitting there but know there is someone like Rural Aid out there that can help.*

**WATER TANK**  
**RECIPIENT**  
**ANON**





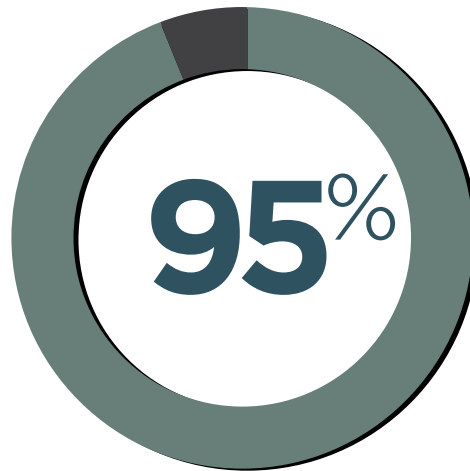
# DISASTER ASSISTANCE

# Farm Recovery Event

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**171**  
VOLUNTEERS  
*donated*  
**5595**  
HOURS  
ASSISTING  
FARMERS

*on*  
**44**  
FARMS



**95%**  
**of farmers agree**  
that assistance from Rural Aid  
volunteers made them feel cared for  
and supported by the wider community



**VIDEO**  
*checkout*  
**DALVEEN FARM  
RECOVERY EVENT**

*You can tell how much they appreciate these events—it really lifts them, gives them a renewed sense of purpose. It's amazing to see that transformation.*

**GRANT MISKIMMIN**  
FARM & COMMUNITY  
COORDINATOR





# DISASTER ASSISTANCE

**Financial  
Assistance**

*over*  
**250**

**DISASTER-AFFECTED  
FAMILIES  
SUPPORTED THROUGH  
PREPAID VISAS**

Rural Aid's Financial support helps farmers when they're impacted by disaster. For example, the varroa mite devastated many bee farmers, affecting their income streams.

One impacted farmer said that thanks to Rural Aid's financial support, they could cover essentials like groceries during the time when they had no income.

The Varroa mite's impact went beyond honey shortages, causing ripple effects across the farming community and threatening livelihoods.



# EDUCATION FUNDING

Our recent Pulse of the Paddock survey showed that more than 60% of respondents are already practising sustainable farming, and many farmers are eager to learn more.

By focusing on locally informed practices, we support sustainable and regenerative agriculture, enhancing livelihoods, promoting food security, and protecting the environment. Recognising that preparedness is crucial in mitigating the impacts of disasters, we are committed to equipping our farmers with the skills and knowledge needed to adapt and thrive.

To further support this effort, we recently introduced funding for farmers to attend educational courses, empowering them to strengthen their resilience and preparedness in the face of future challenges.



*After 30 years in the beef industry I felt the course gave me greater confidence & practical tools to implement further positive changes in our business that will improve the environment and overall profitability of the business.*

**FARMER  
CENTRAL QUEENSLAND**



# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT





# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community Development is a process of bringing communities together through shared passion to create the change they desire. It uses humanity's most valuable tool, conversations, to inspire hope and creativity.

Rural Aid's Community Development Program, in partnership with Peter Kenyon from the Bank of I.D.E.A.S is supporting small rural towns to transform themselves into thriving, self-reliant communities who feel empowered to shape their own futures. By developing unique action plans through the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, towns focus on their existing strengths rather than deficits. This shift in thinking promotes active participation and a sense of ownership over the town's future, fostering resilience and adaptability..

This year Rural Aid continued our ongoing work with our Community Builders in the Western Australia's North Midlands and Wheatbelt areas. It also marked the launch of the Community Builders Program in Central Queensland and the Hunter region of New South Wales.

Rural Aid continues to support numerous individual rural communities through its programs.



*Read inspiring stories about community spirit*

*Through our Community Development programs we work with communities who are seeking to build resilience by coming together and planning for their future. We're committed to our Community Development work because we know that thriving towns and thriving farms go hand-in-hand.*

**STEPH WALSH**  
**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
**PROGRAMS MANAGER**





# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

## CASE STUDY: WAGIN'S (WA) JOURNEY TO COMMUNITY-LED CHANGE AND RESILIENCE

Since joining Rural Aid's Community Builders Program in 2021, Wagin has made significant strides, including the "Co-Operative Care Wagin" project. The project grew out of the town's passion for their older people and concern that as people in Wagin age, they are forced to leave town in search of additional care. Wagin's 'ageing in place' initiative, Co-Operative Care Wagin, will use a co-operative model to connect local needs with local resources. Not only will this help keep people in town for longer and improve wellbeing, it also generates opportunities for sustainable employment and economic growth within the town. Co-Operative Care Wagin, the only one of its kind in WA is supported by Care Together and guided by experts like Peter Westoby. A co-op formation meeting is planned for November.

Through proactive leadership and community-driven initiatives, Wagin is building a more resilient future.



checkout  
**CO-OPERATIVE  
CARE WAGIN  
...CARE TOGETHER  
PROGRAM**



*Thank you, Rural Aid, for helping me see the possibilities and make meaningful change.*

**PARTICIPANT QUOTE**





# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

**24**  
**WORKSHOPS**

*across*

**6**  
**STATES**

*attended by*

**965**  
**COMMUNITY**  
**MEMBERS**

Community workshops ignite a powerful sense of connection and collaboration among community members, inspiring them to uncover and harness local assets such as community groups, events, history and physical infrastructure.

Recognising assets is an empowering process which encourages people to think positively about their town's potential. It creates space for sharing ideas, celebrating successes, and acknowledging collective challenges.

These conversations are powerful tools for building community connectedness, resilience and adaptability in rural communities.

*We were impressed with both of the facilitators and their presentations on the day, both were insightful, and it was clear that both speakers had a thorough understanding of the challenges and opportunities that small rural communities, and their local businesses, have in increasing economic activity in their towns.*

**HUNTER VALLEY**  
**COMMUNITY BUILDERS**  
**PARTICIPANT**







# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

## OUR TOWN ... THE STORY OF GAYNDAH

Gayndah is one of the original ten towns from our community development initiative, the Our Towns program.

The community continues to implement the Community Development Plan it developed, demonstrating how our program facilitates community-led change.

Rural Aid's long-term relationships with towns such as Gayndah highlights our commitment to supporting their ongoing development and resilience.

**IMPACT**

**Farmers and communities feel empowered**  
to identify & implement solutions that allow them to overcome their own challenges

**IMPACT**

**Community has strengthened social networks**  
to connect with & support each other

*Hear what the Gayndah community has to say*



# MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING





# MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

## Counselling

*provided more than*  
**1380**  
**FREE COUNSELLING  
SESSIONS**

Our counsellors live within the communities they serve across rural Australia, allowing us to build meaningful relationships and provide consistent, personalised mental health and wellbeing support in local communities.

*attended*  
**189**  
**COMMUNITY  
EVENTS**

Our staff attend a range of events from participating in Rural Aid hay drops to conversations and attending local community events.

By establishing these relationships, Rural Aid is able to continue providing support before during and after a community has been impacted by a disaster.



# MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

**Mustering  
Growth**

engaged  
**573**  
CHILDREN  
through our  
**MUSTERING  
GROWTH**  
PROGRAM

Mustering Growth celebrates the strengths of growing up in the bush by enhancing kids' resilience, normalising mental health experiences, reducing stigma, increasing mental health literacy, and building coping skills for rural challenges. The program is fun, interactive, flexible, and includes nature-based activities.

Rural Aid maintains ongoing relationships with Monash University with the aim to expand our Mustering Growth program into early childhood classes and high schools. The increasing demand for our mental health support, including Mustering Growth, has led to a rise in participation, with more children engaging each year.

This growing interest has resulted in a waitlist for this program, highlighting the critical need for continued support and expansion.

*Mustering Growth celebrates the strengths needed to grow up in the bush and builds coping skills for the unique challenges faced by rural kids.*

**MYF PITCHER**  
MENTAL HEALTH &  
WELLBEING MANAGER





*For our mates  
in the bush*

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