



## **Report to RAWCS Southern Region 23 May 2021 Drought Community Outreach Program in North Western Victoria**

Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS) has entered a partnership with the Commonwealth Government to assist in delivery of the Drought Community Outreach Program [DCOP].

More than 70 information events will be held in selected towns throughout the drought declared areas for farming families and community members directly impacted by the drought.

The aim is to increase coordination of drought support and enhance community awareness of the Australian Government's drought assistance measures. Covid-19 restrictions have slowed the implementation of the project by more than 12 months.

Rotary's role is to

- Assist with the delivery of community outreach events through community wellbeing activities and BBQ catering.
- Distribute \$500 debit cards to eligible farming households that are experiencing financial hardship due to drought as direct support and to improve levels of economic activity in regions by utilizing these cards in local communities and businesses.

The Rotary Club of Bendigo took part in 5 events in North Western Victoria during the week of March 21 to 23. Two Rotarians attended each function in Birchip, Kerang, Sea Lake, Ouyen and Robinvale.

Four Rotarians from other Clubs assisted with the administration at each event and local Rotary Clubs (Warracknabeal, Kerang, Mildura and Robinvale) provided bbq food and drinks.

Our role was to support farmers and farm workers as they completed their application for the \$500 debit card. The forms were then scanned and sent to Parramatta. The applicants should have received the debit card within 2 weeks.

Attendance varied between locations with a moderate number of applications at Birchip and Ouyen, more at Kerang and very few at Sea Lake. Robinvale was very busy as the local community facilitator, Akesa Kei, was able to round up many of the workers from the almond orchards.

We were able to link the Bendigo Club's Year 12 drought scholarship program to the visit. Six scholarships were awarded to students at Mildura, Swan Hill, Sea Lake

and Robinvale. Funding for the scholarships came from the art show "Life on the Land" held in November 2019 to support drought affected communities (Prior to fires and Covid-19).

The RAWCS drought project was coordinated by:

David Pearson, Deputy Chair at Rotary Australia World Community Service

Rotarians at all events were:

- PDG Jerry Casburn (District 9520, Rotary Club of Unley)
- Briony Casburn (Rotary Club of McLaren Vale)
- PDG Janne Speirs (District 9820, Rotary Club of Traralgon)
- PE Brad Quillam (Rotary Club of Kinglake Ranges)

Bendigo Rotarians who attended;

- PP Garry Gunnell (Birchip)
- PP Peter Hyett (Kerang)
- PP Brian Figg (Kerang)
- PE Tom Dobeli (Sea Lake, Ouyen and Robinvale)
- PP Bob Edgar (Sea Lake, Ouyen and Robinvale)

The Bendigo Club was not able to support an additional 3 events at Murtoa, Hopetoun and Werrimull for the following week as the Club was preparing for the Easter Art Show.