

Rural Financial Counselling Service NSW - Central West Inc



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Succession Planning—Program development

The Government has acted on a key recommendation from the 2009 Drought Policy Review to better help farmers address their succession planning requirements. The previous Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; Tony Burke in late April 2010 announced an extra \$2.43 million for the Rural Financial Counselling Services across Australia. With the extra funding, Mr Burke said he had asked that issues surrounding succession planning should, for the first time, be a key focus for rural financial counsellors.

In order to assist with the roll out of Succession Planning across Australia, DAFF’s Office of Rural Financial Counselling (ORFC) has recently engaged a consultant to develop a succession planning toolkit for rollout to all RFCS service providers. The toolkit will have policy statement on the role of Rural Financial Counsellors in the succession planning process, template forms and generic checklist, succession planning fact sheets document etc.

It is anticipated that the toolkit will provide a guide for the Rural Financial Counsellor in the pre-referral work and case management of the client through to completion of the succession planning process.

With this succession planning announcement, Rural Financial Counsellors will for the first time place a priority on identifying clients who need to consider succession planning. They will help those interested farmers to identify possible support services such as lawyers, succession planning advisors and then help farmers put together the information required when they visit these service providers.

For information on Succession Planning contact your local Counsellor or Dubbo Regional Office 02 6884 2275.

Additional RFC’s recruitment to service client need in Parkes and Buronga

RFCS-CW management has over the past year undertaken to analysing client service needs to gain a better understanding of the manpower requirements to effectively service our clients, and improve our ability to adequately service client needs in geographical and/or industry specific areas as required. This has resulted in a management decision to realign RFC resources within the July 2010 to June 2011 year and undertake to recruit two additional counsellors in specifically identified locations as detailed below:

Parkes/Forbes RFC Position

The above mentioned analysis identified that active client needs within the Parkes area was high in comparison to other areas throughout the region, and warranted increased attention to our traditional service delivery in this area. In July this year management made the decision to increase the presence of the RFCS in Parkes and district. As a result RFCS-CW has now undertaken to recruit a full time Rural Financial Counsellor to service Parkes and surrounds. This Counsellor will work out of our Parkes office which is currently located at the **Parkes Neighbourhood Centre—telephone contact 02 6862 1646.**

RFC Specialist (Wine) Position

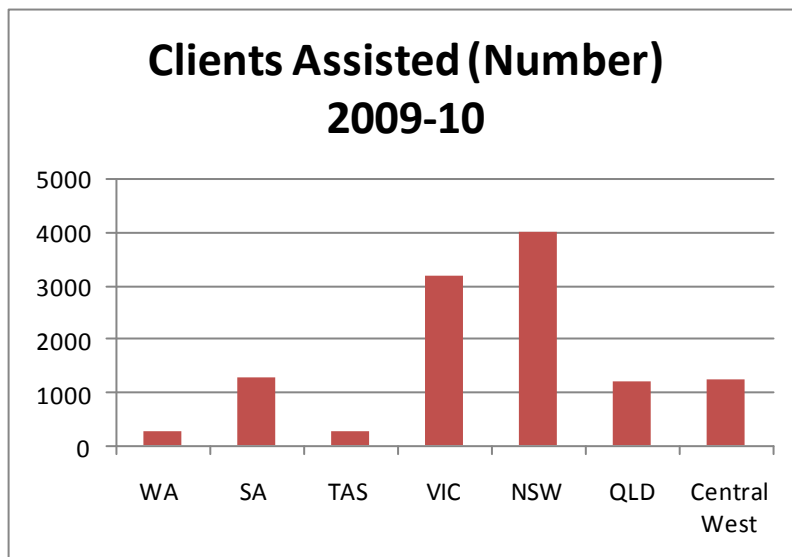
RFCS-CW has undertaken to recruit and appoint a part time counsellor (Wine RFC) to be based at Buronga NSW. It is envisaged that the counsellor will work predominantly in the Wentworth & Balranald shires. The counsellor will liaise closely with drought and GFC affected small block irrigators; in particular farmers in the wine industry and industry association’s such as Murray Valley Wine Growers’ based out of Mildura. The counsellor will provide specialist assistance to clients within the industry to identify options for their business, including providing best practice management options to improve the viability of their business, or to adjust their enterprise in other ways. This RFC will be based out of our **Buronga Office at 15 Silver City Hwy, Tel: 03 5021 1558.**

From the CEO's desk. "The year in review"

RFCS-CW continues to play an extremely active role in supporting rural clients within our service area. During the past 12 months our primary focus has been to support the rural communities whilst they battle the combined effects of unfavourable seasonal conditions, and the longer term challenge of climate change.

Our service has continued to encourage primary producers and small rural businesses to adopt self-reliant approaches for managing within a changing climate. It is hoped that our continued support will encourage early recovery of agriculture and small rural business consistent with long-term sustainable levels. In line with these goals the following significant achievements have been accomplished in the 2009-2010 financial year, with the RFCS-CW providing 14,660 client assistance hours being 37.5% of all NSW clients, or alternatively providing 14% of all client assistance hours on a national basis.

Over the past year our counsellors have been extremely focused on assisting clients to set goals and take action to improve their long-term financial circumstances and viability. Counsellors & their clients have embraced the Enterprise Action Plan (EAP), a tool developed by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's (DAFF) – Office of Rural Financial Counselling. The EAP allows clients, with assistance from counsellors, to develop and implement strategies to boost their rural business through a forward planning approach covering such areas as management practices, climate variation, cash flow planning, farm business training & development and support towards succession planning. By June 30th 2010 over 88% of RFCS-CW clients had engaged an EAP to review their financial position more closely, I might add an extremely pleasing result.



As the dry appears to be easing with good winter and spring rainfall, and with approximately 4.2% (Sept 2010) of NSW declared in drought, our service delivery into the new financial year will be to continue to strive in the effective, flexible and responsible delivery of assistance to those in need and further assist the rural sector through the roll out of Succession Planning.



Western Division dust storms - Sept 2009



Brewarrina Floods - Jan 2010



Canola crop - October 2010

Cluster Training for Central West RFC's

At the State conference in May 2010, RFCS-CW management identified the need for a restructure of the current staff training programs. This restructure would involve replacing two of the quarterly staff seminars in September and March with flexible regionally based group meetings. These groups or clusters of RFC's will be based around strategic geographical areas, with the location of the meetings central to three identified regions, Southern, Northern and Eastern.

Through regular group meetings, RFC's will now have the opportunity to learn and develop their skills as well as engage in general discussion with other RFC's. By changing the way that RFCS-CW conducts its staff training sessions, we will hopefully gain benefits of a peer based learning structure.

These benefits to RFC's will be:

- Better social relationships between staff
- Better knowledge of how to handle unique situations through shared experiences
- Positive changes to behaviour through observation of peers
- Self-satisfaction by knowing that their own knowledge and experience will help others