

ROTARY'S ROLE IN \$9m+ FIGHT FOR OUR FARMERS

Thanks to Channel Nine for their assistance with this story and accompanying images.



Channel Nine has joined forces with Australian Rotarians and the National Farmers' Federation to raise funds for Aussie farmers facing the worst drought in living memory. At the time of print, more than \$9 million had been raised, with the figure still rising. The funds will be distributed to farmers in need by Australian Rotary clubs and districts, in conjunction with the National Farmers' Federation.

ACROSS the country, thousands of farmers and their families are battling the country's worst drought in 100 years. One hundred percent of NSW and around two-thirds of Queensland is now in drought, with pastures turned to rubble and the cost of freight and feed skyrocketing. Many Australians have been forced to make gut-wrenching decisions in order to survive.

As part of the *Today* show's Fighting for our Farmers drought relief appeal, Channel Nine partnered with Rotary in Australia, the National Farmers' Federation (NFF), Optus and Westpac to host Nine's Farm Aid Telethon on August 20. More than \$9 million was

raised for farmers doing it tough as a result of the devastating natural disaster that has ravaged much of rural Australia.

Broadcasting live from the Dubbo Showground in Central West NSW and Warwick in Southeast Queensland, the event saw residents enjoy a jumping castle, mechanical bull and live performances from Shannon Noll, Mental As Anything, Dragon and Wendy Matthews.

Other personalities included *Today* co-hosts Karl Stefanovic and

My wish is to spend some time with a farmer's wife and support/help her. I work full-time, but really want to give back. By the way, I only buy Australian fruit and veg and so should our supermarkets. I'm happy to pay more for my produce as long as it goes back to our dear farmers. Please contact me if there is a way to actually support our farmers by visiting and being a friend.
- Drought Relief Donor

Georgie Gardner, Deborah Knight, David Campbell, Leila McKinnon, *Doctor Doctor* star Rodger Corser, Natalia Cooper,

FARM AID TELETHON

While all donations, no matter how small, were greatly appreciated, special mention must be given to the following particularly generous pledges on the day:

McDonald's Australia and its licensees: **\$250,000**

Great Northern Brewing Co: **\$250,000**

Keith Urban & Nicole Kidman: **\$100,000**

GME: **\$100,000**

Sydney Markets: **\$50,000**

NSW Blues Major Sponsors: **\$66,000**

Alcatel: **\$30,000**

NSW Government: **\$25,000**

Tamworth, NSW. (Photo: By Today show cameraman Sam Reynolds)



Today show host Karl Stefanovic meets the locals in Gunnedah.
(Photo: By Today show cameraman Sam Reynolds)

Shelley Craft, Melissa Downes, Andrew Lofthouse, Garry Youngberry, Aislin Kriukelis, *The Block* Foreman Keith Schleiger, *Blockheads* Norm, Bianca and Carla, and Hayden and Sara, *Bite Club*'s Marny Kennedy, *Married at First Sight* expert John Aiken and Aussie swimming sensation James Magnussen.

Today's Karl said it was a privilege to spend the day with farmers and their families.

"To hear their stories and to see their struggle has been so humbling. This

was an incredible event to be a part of and the response from people right across Australia was awesome. I want to thank every single person who gave their hard-earned dollars to help our farmers. And I want our farmers to know our coverage of this crisis will continue."

With years of can-do attitude, Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS) is seen as a go-to organisation by the

My heart breaks for our farmers. I hope this small contribution helps to make a difference. Thank you, Rotary, Channel 9 and the National Farmers' Federation for creating a mechanism for Aussies to get money directly to the farmers so they can feed their stock and take care of their families. With much love.
- Drought Relief Donor



Three local boys brought plenty of smiles and laughs as the sun rose in Loomberah, NSW.

GO DRY FOR THE DRY. Instead of having your usual weekly supply of grog, donate the money to the farmers. A week without booze will do us all good and the farmers will thank you.

- Drought Relief Donor



Today show co-hosts Karl Stefanovic and Georgie Gardner enjoyed meeting everyone who came out for the launch of the Today show's Fighting for our Farmers' drought relief appeal on August 6, when they broadcast live from the land.

I hope there are no significant administration costs being deducted from our donations. I'm sorry, but that's all I can afford at the moment; that's the last dollars and cents in my bank, if I could do more I would. I'm on government payments and can barely afford to live as it is. But these poor buggers bring a tear to my eye and I will donate as much as I can every chance I can... God bless all you people doing it tough out there; I'm not religious, but I'll pray for you and some rain.

- Drought Relief Donor

Nine Network to assist with fundraising for causes and, in conjunction with NFF, will distribute funds raised through the Fighting for our Farmers appeal to those in need.

RAWCS chair Michael Perkins and his wife Lesley recently drove from Tasmania to Townsville and, as a former farmer, said it was particularly heartbreakingly to see the devastation caused by the drought.

"The soil in the paddocks was being blown away as it is so dry. The

HANDS-ON HELP IN DISTRICT 9650

By Reg Pierce

Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS) Chair, D9650

To protect the identity of the people involved, I will not mention their names or the name of the town.

On Wednesday, August 15, I received a phone call from a lady "out west" who was very distressed and nervous. From my time at Lifeline as a suicide counsellor, I believe she was probably suicidal and if not suicidal, she was in a very bad way.

She very timidly asked if we, Rotary, could give her one bale of hay. She told me her husband asked her not to ring us, but she felt she had no other choice. I assured her we could, and would, help her. I decided to make a "Captain's call".

I purchased the last two bales of hay in town, then rang a fellow Rotarian and asked if he could deliver them for me. This required a round trip of around seven hours. It was no problem my friend said. Without a second thought, he donated a large round bale of hay, some cattle pellets and a few other things then set out.

As he was nearing the town, he phoned the lady, said he was nearly there and asked her to put the kettle on for a cup of coffee. The woman replied, "If you want coffee, you'd better bring some. We haven't had any for three weeks."

After delivering the hay and other supplies, my friend took the lady shopping to purchase everyday goods they could not afford.

My friend rang me later to say that the woman and her husband were absolutely thrilled, yet still embarrassed. In a matter of two days they had gone from abject depression, to ecstatic joy, and all because of a few bales of hay, some groceries and the realisation that others really care.

I am so very proud of my club members, my RAWCS team and the fact that I am a Rotarian.

Billie and Fox are 10 and 8-year-old kids wanting to help make a difference to our farmers. They have donated out of their own money and would like to ask other kids to do the same. It's not just the farmers that need help, it's the kids of farmers as well.

- *Drought Relief Donor*

(Photos: Channel Nine)



livestock were walking skin and bones. Country businesses were struggling to hold on. It was enough to bring tears to the eyes," Michael said.

"I'm proud the RAWCS financial infrastructure is now allowing Rotarians to work hand-in-hand with the community, the Nine Network, NFF and other organisations, to raise funds and bring relief to our farmers.

"Our staff and volunteers have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to combine RAWCS' financial infrastructure with these organisations' community reach for this cause. It is ensuring extraordinary awareness and funds are being raised across the nation to help our farmers and their families. On their behalf, I thank you from the bottom of my heart." •

So pleased that Rotary – a national/international organisation – has once again stepped up and taken on this cause. Well done Rotary for helping our Aussie farmers.

- *Drought Relief Donor*