

SOME HEROES
WEAR CAPES...

OURS WEAR
HELMETS.



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What started as a feature on Rotary's continued dedication to assisting drought-affected Australians took a terrible turn for the worse over the Christmas/New Year period as our tinder-dry country burst into flames.

Over 10 million hectares of land (basically all of England) has burned to the ground. Thousands of homes have been destroyed, 32 people – including eight firefighters – have lost their lives, and more than one billion animals have perished.

This is far from exhaustive coverage of the 2019-20 Australian bushfire crisis. New stories of loss and devastation, hope and humanity, are a daily occurrence on our news and social media feeds. And for Rotary, our work has only just begun.

As the smoke recedes and the skies begin to clear, the true capacity of our districts, our clubs, our members and our networks will come to light, easing the burden of our heroic first responders fighting so valiantly to save what is salvageable... and often what is not.

These are some early stories of support for our fire-ravaged communities and those fighting to save them; some stories of the long dry that has fuelled this unprecedented summer of suffering; and a few stories of how we can all play a small part in supporting our communities in need.

So, pour a glass of vino from the Adelaide Hills, crumble some cheese from Central Tilba, carve up some charcuterie from Barham, tear a chunk of sourdough from East Gippsland, and read on.

Without doubt, there will be many more inspiring stories of help and healing to come.



Heal. Restore. Rebuild.

“The Australian bushfires are an unprecedented catastrophe of major proportions and Rotary and Rotarians can play an active role in getting the affected families and small businesses back on their feet. Through our Rotary clubs we can quickly identify those in most need in a manner that will be of most benefit to those families and communities.”
(John Stockbridge – RAWCS National Communications Manager)

From California to Australia with love

President of the Rotary Club of Kurrajong North Richmond, NSW, Paul Rogers and wife Anne, were on their way to man a bushfire recovery barbecue in St Albans when they received an urgent request from district governor Kalma McLellan to coordinate the distribution of 75,000 N95 (P2 in Australia) particulate respirator masks. The masks had been generously donated by Californian humanitarian aid foundation Direct Relief, with the assistance of Qantas, for free distribution to communities in greater NSW.

Within an hour at the barbecue, Paul had spoken with Federal Member for Macquarie Susan Templeman MP, NSW State Member for Hawkesbury Robyn Preston MP and Hawkesbury Mayor Barry Calvert, and a plan was put in place.

“To get all three tiers of government to agree within one hour was quite incredible,” Paul said.

It was agreed the masks would be split down the middle, with 37,500 going to Wollindilly Shire Council for the Rotary Club of Picton to coordinate local allocations and 37,500 going to Hawkesbury City for local distribution by the Rotary Club of Kurrajong North Richmond.

The response to the masks was incredible, with Kurrajong North Richmond’s Facebook post announcing their availability receiving more than 5000 likes.

Since the arrival of the masks on Thursday, January 16, Paul and fellow club members, including Jim Scotland (inducted into the club on February 21), worked around the clock to get them out into the community.

“Because we had a structure in place when the boxes arrived, we were able to get all 37,500 masks into the community within seven days,” Paul said.



PICTURED: Clarence Dargan RFS officer Antony Cowie and assistant governor Blair Leslie, of the Rotary Club of Mosman.

"As of yesterday (Monday, January 20), we had 26 boxes left and these were distributed to the communities of Blackheath, Mt Tomah, Bell, Mt Victoria, Megalong Valley, Medlow Bath, Colo Heights, Wilberforce, Bilpin, Windsor, Richmond and Kurrajong.

"A further 15,000 masks were also sent to the Rotary Club of Picton's Ally Cox, who said there was still an active need for the masks in their recovery efforts. Bravo Zulu to the RAAF for arranging transport from Wilberforce to Picton."

Direct Relief commits up to one million masks for bushfire recovery efforts

Since shipping its first batch of masks on January 6 via air transportation donated by Qantas, Direct Relief has delivered 430,000 masks to Australia. The humanitarian medical aid group has now increased its commitment, saying it has allocated and is prepared to deliver up to a total of one million masks if needed.

"The historic fires in California have made everyone so keenly aware of the air-quality health risks that massive fires cause, as well as the frustration and concern of being advised to use particular types of masks that get stocked out fast and are unavailable," said Direct Relief president and CEO Thomas Tighe. "Our Aussie friends are, unfortunately, encountering the exact scenario that prompted Direct Relief's stockpiling plan, so of course our team and supporters have been thankful to be able to pitch in."

Among the partners receiving the most masks to date are the Australian Red Cross, local Rotary clubs, and Convoy of Hope, which are in turn distributing them to people needing them in local communities. Direct Relief has also distributed masks to Surf Life Saving Australia for its lifeguard members, RSPCA for volunteers in the field rescuing animals, and local brigades of the Rural Fire Service.



PICTURED: Firefighter Kurt Hill of Albion Park Rural Fire Service loads 15,000 Direct Relief N95/P2 masks in Picton, NSW.

BELOW: President of the Rotary Club of Kurrajong North Richmond Paul Rogers at Pine Crest Orchards, Bilpin, with Galbraith family orchardists John, Joanna and Erica Galbraith, Shane and Macsen Armstrong. A further box of masks were shared with the Bilpin Post Office for community distribution.



"This story is still on the ground and rolling," Ally said. "My husband and the kids and I are hopping in the car on Saturday and taking two, possibly three, pallets down to the South Coast for distribution in Lake Conjola. We are also in talks with local MPs to see where else they are needed."

Paul stressed that the masks were for use in the bushfire recovery phase as protection against smoke, asbestos dust and residual dust arising from the movement of charred and burnt debris.

"Historically, Rotary isn't a first responder, but is supporting our valiant volunteers through the Australian bushfire crisis with the allocation of these N95/P2 particulate respirator masks. The masks were made available at no charge to a wide variety of locations like doctor's surgeries, nursing homes, chemists, Rotary clubs, council offices and other places where the community gathers.

"But they also played an important

role in addressing fear," Paul said. "The elderly in particular were well and truly frazzled. When they just break down and give you a hug like you're some kind of saviour giving them something they desperately need, it's very embarrassing really."

One thousand masks were also distributed to communities in the Central Tablelands of NSW by assistant governor Blair Leslie, of the Rotary Club of Mosman. Blair handed out masks in the towns of Clarence, Capertee, Dargan, Ilford, Rylstone, Glen Alice and Olinda.

A box was also donated to Blaze Aid volunteers based in the village of Running Stream helping locals replace thousands of kilometres of fencing destroyed by the fires.

PICTURED: District 9685 governor Kalma McLellan, of the Rotary Club of Ryde, collecting masks at Hawkesbury City Council Maintenance Depot at Wilberforce.





Brighton reaches out

In its initial response to the bushfire crisis, the Rotary Club of Brighton, Vic, has made a \$5000 contribution to the Wilson Storage Bushfire Appeal via Go Fund Me (www.gofundme.com/ff/wilson-storage-bushfire-appeal). All contributions made via this appeal go to the Victorian Country Fire Association. Wilson matched the \$5000 donation dollar for dollar, so \$10,000 is now on its way to the Victorian CFA. Wilson Storage has been a major supporter of the club's fundraising efforts for many years.

The club's next major fundraiser, the Swimland Great Australia Day Swim, was held on Sunday, January 26. All proceeds from the swim raffle will go towards bushfire relief as well as donations received from competitors at the time of registering for the swim.

The club will also be making a contribution to the Rotary District 9800 Bushfire Disaster Fund in the very near future.

"The Rotary Club of Brighton and its members' thoughts are with the impacted people and communities as well as the valiant firefighters and volunteers who are on the frontline of these terrible bushfires," said club president Keith Cameron. "We extend our admiration and support for the work they're doing in the fire affected communities in this time of crisis."

The club's board is currently in the process of assessing other opportunities to contribute further club funds and fundraise to assist people, communities and the wildlife impacted by the bushfires.

Essential 'hands-on' project part of bushfire recovery

2AY Albury Wodonga

Rotary members from Holbrook to Melbourne have banded together to lead an essential 'hands-on' project as part of the bushfire recovery efforts in the Upper Murray.

Graeme Sayer from the Rotary Club of Belvoir Wodonga, Vic, says like many volunteer groups and individuals, Rotarians were quick to respond in whatever way they could.

"Our Rotary district very quickly put a project together to get some people here to do some volunteer fencing for the Corryong community," Graeme said.

While there are team leaders who have experience in fencing, other Rotarians and volunteers are joining in with a lot of the grunt work.

"A lot of the work we're doing is demolishing fences where the posts have been burnt and the fence can't be repaired, so we go out and do that," Graeme said.

"We'll then go through and put the fence up. We see the priority as perimeter fencing, we're not doing any internal fencing at this stage.

"What we can do with about 40 people is a drop in the ocean of what really needs to be done, but the farming community and the Corryong community can see that we've responded pretty quickly to help them."

While Rotarians are playing their part in the fence building project, they're keen for anyone to join them.

"We had police officers come off duty a couple of days ago, they said they'd like to help, so we have nine off-duty police officers helping with the fencing," Graeme said.

"We've had a couple of people travel down from Brisbane, someone rang from Bourke to tell us they're coming next week.

"We also need to thank organisations back in Albury Wodonga like Scot's School and Westmont, who are cooking dinners for us and bringing those up on a daily basis."

If you'd like to register interest in the Upper Murray fence-building project, email corryongfire@gmail.com

Sydney Irish community brings water relief

A group of Irish construction workers banded together in November to take dozens of trucks of water to drought-stricken farmers in regional NSW.

On Sunday, November 17, PDG Bob Ryan, of the Rotary Club of Armidale North, NSW, was contacted by Chris Murphy from the Irish community informing him that he and Peter McMahon were organising a truck convoy of water from Sydney to Armidale. The area was in severe drought with raging bushfires, five of which were burning out of control, so the Irish community pulled together to help people affected.

“Chris said he had between 10 and 20 vehicles in the convoy and asked if Rotary would help with logistics in the typical style of Rotarians,” said Bob, who took on the role of organising and distribution coordinator. “The answer, of course, was yes.”

The Rotary Clubs of Armidale North, Armidale, Armidale AM, Armidale Central, Uralla, Walcha, Dorrigo and Guyra were contacted and, with only six days to put distribution plans in place, all agreed they wanted to be part of distributing the water.

On Saturday, November 23, a convoy of 89 trucks, vans, cars and water tankers arrived, carrying 128 Irish people, 310 pallets (310,000 bottles) of bottled water, 12 x 1000-litre pods of water, water tankers with 350,000 litres of bulk water to help the fire fighters fill their planes, helicopters and firefighting tankers, Coles and Woolworths vouchers (\$10, \$20, \$50) to the value of \$1575, 41 accommodation vouchers to the Mercantile Hotel, the Rocks, Sydney, offering a 50 per cent discount, and a very large container with a variety of ladies and children’s items, including 200 wrapped Christmas presents for children under five, valued between \$8000 and \$10,000.

The Rotary Clubs of Armidale North and Armidale AM hastily arranged a barbecue to feed the 200 people who arrived to welcome the convoy and their new Irish friends.

The water was distributed as follows:

- The Rotary Club of Walcha distributed 48 pallets over an 80,000km radius of Walcha to local farmers, RFS volunteers, a number of small bush schools



☞ ABOVE: 350,000 litres of water being dumped into the RFS Dam at Armidale Airport.
☞ RIGHT: Two local farmers say thank you for the water.



whose water tanks were contaminated by ash, dust and smoke, as well as the villages of Yarrowitch, Nowendoc, Woolbrook and Niangla.

- The Rotary Club of Uralla distributed 58 pallets over a 60,000km radius of Uralla, including the villages of Kentucky, Bundarra, Kingstown and the Wollun area, a number of small bush schools and the RFS.
- The Rotary Club of Dorrigo distributed five pallets to the RFS, Tyringham farmers, Dundurrabin farmers, Blaze Aid, and small bush schools.
- The Rotary Club of Armidale Central distributed five pallets to the Bundara community and Bundara Retirement Village.
- The Rotary Club of Guyra distributed three pallets to local rural merchants' suppliers for farmers.
- The Rotary Clubs of Armidale and Armidale North distributed 104 pallets to all areas in a 250,000km radius on the Tablelands, including to Blaze Aid in many locations, the RFS, Ebor Primary School, remote and isolated farmers, Tenterfield farmers, and RFS pilots flying fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters. The temperature can reach 50°C above a fire in these aircraft.
- Eighty-four pallets were distributed by various local rural supply organisations from across the Northern Tablelands.

"My sincere thanks go to the Irish community for their incredible effort in bringing this together and to all the Rotary clubs – in particular the Rotarians involved from District 9650 – for their unwavering support and hard work with the distribution of this urgently needed water. You truly have made a difference," Bob said.

"It would be totally remiss of me not to thank the local businesspeople who supplied transport trucks, storage facilities, and forklifts, all free of charge, working with Rotary to help their communities."



PICTURED: Rotary E Club of District 9650 members erecting the new school sign at Ebor Public School. (Photo: Tenterfield Star)

Support for Ebor Public School

Over an extended weekend in December, 15 members of the Rotary E Club of District 9650 and their partners embarked on a trip to the small NSW town of Ebor, just north east of Armidale. Some stayed in their caravans parked behind the Ebor Falls Hotel Motel, while others were accommodated in the motel.

The aim of the visit was to perform gardening duties at Ebor Public School, including the planting of two good sized trees the club had donated to the school, and to erect a new school sign.

With just 17 students and an exceptional principal, the school treated the Rotarians to a morning tea with the students on the Friday and then to a sausage sizzle following the completion of the work on the Sunday.

Ebor has been devastated by the bushfires as well as the drought. Fires came right up to the town leaving behind a black and charred mess. The Guy Fawkes National Park was burnt, including total devastation of the Ebor Falls viewing platform, where hundreds of people visit annually to witness the falls in all their splendour.

"The experience the Rotarians and their partners had while working at the school was very heart-

warming," club president John Barwick from Tamworth, NSW, said. "In fact, the club is considering going back to Ebor in 2020 to install a water pipe to run from the rear of the school to set up a tap in the school's front yard."

John handed each student, from kindergarten to Year 6, an envelope containing a special Christmas message along with a \$10 note. With such devastation in and around the town, it was felt that money would be the best gift under the circumstances. The children were delighted.

The Ebor Falls Hotel Motel provided a Christmas dinner on the Saturday night, with all the usual Christmas delights.

The group also paid a visit to the Homestead RFS in Tenterfield, where they made a presentation to Homestead and Barney Downs crews to show their appreciation for all that the firefighters are going through.

The certificate of appreciation cited 'For your unrelenting devotion, commitment and service in fighting the devastating fires in the Tenterfield District'.

"This was a weekend the Rotary E Club of District 9650 members and their partners will never forget," John said.

Drought and bushfire relief for traumatised Northern Tablelands

By Steve Green
The Armidale Express

Determined to lend a hand with the drought, the Rotary Club of Armidale, NSW, was focussing attention on drought-affected farmers when the Bees Nest bushfire flared up to add to the mayhem.

Local farmers were traumatised by the bushfires, however, \$60,000 raised by the Rotary Clubs of Armidale and Armidale AM brought some timely relief.

Fundraising efforts were assisted by two Compassionate Matching Grants, administered by Rotary Australia World Community Service, and made possible thanks to a generous million-dollar donation by Australian philanthropist Dick Smith.

The grants match dollar for dollar funds raised by Rotary clubs for projects providing direct relief to people in need.

President of the Rotary Club of Armidale Grant Harris said there was a communal group of people on the eastern side of the Northern Tablelands who were in need.

"So, our club put up a case for a grant and got the tick of approval. We went for the maximum amount available, \$15,000, and Dick Smith matched it with \$15,000.

"We were able to buy \$30,000 worth of vouchers from agricultural companies and feed them to the rural financial councillor. She chose the destinations for the vouchers because she knew who was in the most need."

Grant said the kickback bonus was that all the companies were locally owned businesses. The project proved highly popular

and a great success.

"People responded to it very positively," he said.

"As soon as they saw the description of the project, we got donations from individuals, through our clubs and through other Rotary clubs. The Rotary Club of Armidale Central was fantastic in the beginning."

President of the Rotary Club of Armidale AM Sam Doyle said his club also raised \$15,000 to make up another \$30,000 to keep the project going.

"I put our project out as the Armidale and Northern Tablelands region bushfire disaster relief," Sam said.

"It was a bit broader than Grant's, but it is specifically targeting the bushfire victims in our local government area and up the Northern Tablelands area.

"I did that because Member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly Adam Marshall has repeatedly said the Northern Tablelands is the worst affected by this worst drought in recorded history."

Sam said they had received donations from right around the country and overseas.

"The vouchers are important to not only keep the farmers going, but also to keep the businesses going.

"We're also working on a third \$30,000 grant through the Armidale Rotaract Club."

Sam and Grant said that while they could not buy B-Doubles of fodder to deliver, they could provide immediate relief to show those experiencing hardship they were not forgotten.

This is an edited version of an article that first ran in The Armidale Express.

What to say to someone who's lost their home in the Australian bushfires

By James Findlay
ABC Life

On New Year's Eve, our family home, my parents' dream home, the home my dad built 27 years ago, went up in flames.

We loved that house, in the breezy beachside suburb of Surf Beach, Batemans Bay, NSW. It was full of so many happy memories.

Just a couple of weeks ago, my brother and I were looking at all the photos on the walls, laughing and reminiscing about the times we had growing up. I found a watch I loved as a kid, and my journal from primary school.

Unfortunately, I left them behind and now they're gone. All those photos, gone. Hours of home movies, gone. The cuckoo clock that 21-year-old Mum carried in her backpack on her big trip around Europe before she married Dad, gone.

But we're not alone. Thousands of Australian families have lost their homes this summer. People have lost their homes, their farms, their businesses. Far worse, some people have lost loved ones.

Watching the bushfire coverage can make you feel helpless. And with so many people being affected, there's a good chance you might encounter someone who's lost everything.

As someone whose family home is now ash, iron and rubble, here's some advice on what to say and what, perhaps, not to say.

Avoid talking about hypothetical situations

"But did you do everything you could do to protect the place?" is

not something anyone wants to hear. And what if there was something that could have been done? It's too late to do anything about it now.

Sure, in good time, we can talk about improving our fire plans, but now is not the time for us to be ridden with guilt about what more we could have done to save our home and all our possessions.

Saving your own home is fraught with danger, and only recommended for people with training and very organised plans.

We saw in Victoria the Premier say "if you can leave, you must leave". You can't defend much when even our leaders are telling us to leave.

Don't say 'I hope you have insurance?'

Do you ask someone with a bad health condition if they have health insurance? How well do you know this person?

If you're incredibly close, sure, I guess you can ask about financial details, but otherwise, don't go fishing for information unless it's offered. Having the fire victim wonder what could have been if they'd had insurance is not going to offer any comfort.

Even if one does have insurance, it sounds like everything in the house is replaceable or has monetary value. Not true.

No amount of money will bring back my great-auntie Jo's paintings, or my Oma's godfather's silverware cutlery that he created and then survived through WWII Germany. Those things are irreplaceable.

It might not be the time for optimism

When someone is going through a horrible time, it can be easy to say that things will get better.

Things will get better, but only because we have to think they will. Any alternative is unfathomable. But we also need to grieve our loss.

Grieving is an important part of the healing cycle. Let us acknowledge that something terrible has happened, and let us feel that. Only then can we move on.



PICTURED: When James and his family returned to their family home in Batemans Bay after the fires, they found ash and rubble. (Supplied: James Findlay)

Ask 'Is there anything I can do?'

If you mean it, offer assistance. My family has been offered so much help from family and friends, such as accommodation, meals and hugs.

It all helps. Just having that feeling of support helps astronomically. No-one wants to feel alone when going through this.

If you want to offer to purchase something for your friend/family who's lost everything, maybe ask beforehand, even if it's something little. No-one needs six pairs of salt and pepper grinders.

I've been asking my parents' friends to copy old photographs of my parents so they have some old photos again in the house.

There's no way they'll get back all the photos they had, but it's a small gesture that goes a long way. It shows you care.

'I'm sorry' does help

I know it might sound like a weird thing to say, but it's really comforting to hear.

At the end of the day, there's nothing that can be done. The place has burnt down, everything is gone, you can't undo the fire.

But you can offer empathy and comfort – two things this world seems to be short of sometimes and the same two things we bushfire survivors need most.

So, while it may feel like we've lost everything, we really haven't. We thankfully still have each other, and we will make new memories, with new stuff, in a new home. But with no cuckoo clock.

This period of grief is incredibly painful, but it can be made a lot less painful with the love and support of those around you.

To everyone who has experienced loss this summer, I'm so sorry. You're not alone, and we'll all get through it together.

This article originally appeared online at ABC Life (abc.net.au/life) and has been republished with the permission of the ABC.



Farmer Joe's Pantry is open in Wauchope from 10am to 2pm on Wednesdays and Fridays so that dairy farmers can visit when they're not milking. If you'd like to support the pantry with donations, contact Pam Foye via pamfoye1@gmail.com and follow the program on Facebook @farmerjoespantry

PICTURED: Colin Norton, Pam Foye and Lea Lloyd, of the Rotary Club of Port Macquarie Sunrise, help out at Farmer Joe's Pantry in Wauchope. (Photo: *Wauchope Gazette*/Laura Telford)

Open pantry puts food on farmers' tables

By Kylie Hatfield

Farmers in the Wauchope area of the NSW mid-north coast who have been hit hard by drought and recent bushfires now have access to food to feed their families and pets, thanks to an initiative being driven by the Rotary Club of Port Macquarie Sunrise.

Farmer Joe's Pantry opened its doors in mid-November to provide relief to struggling farmers and families by way of access to non-perishable food items. Originally set up to help farmers affected by drought, the reach extended when bushfires went through the mid-north coast region days before the pantry was due to open.

"It was a natural thing for us to open up to the victims of the fires as well. Some have lost their homes, and some have lost their livelihoods," said Pam Foye, who is the driving force behind the initiative.

"One farmer told me that one day he was employing 12 people, and the day after the fires they were all unemployed because he lost his sawmill. So, it really has affected the wider community."

Now being accessed by around 30 families each week, the pantry has received donations of non-perishable food items, toiletries and pet food, as well as cash donations close to \$6000, which has been used to

provide those in need with vouchers for local suppliers of fresh produce and meat.

"Donations have come from everywhere; Darwin, Sydney, Brisbane, the Gold Coast, even Western Australia. We also have collection points throughout the local communities and in supermarkets, and we receive deliveries from Woolworths that people have purchased online and had sent straight to us," Pam said.

The pantry has been set up to meet the immediate needs of those who are struggling, with some items available depending on the time of year.

"Our main priority is to feed people, to keep food on their tables. Because that's what they need right now. We also had toys for the children before Christmas and we've got backpacks, books and pencils available for families getting ready to send their kids back to school, and Easter will be coming up soon," Pam said.

"We're also able to help out with water through Reg Pierce at the Rotary Club of Wauchope. We ask the farmers who come in how their tanks are and if they're empty then we'll arrange for a delivery of water via Reg.

"Farmers are a very proud bunch, so we're very respectful of their privacy. But working together, this is Rotary doing what Rotary does best."

Boonah turning gold into liquid gold

By Kylie Hatfield

Towards the end of 2019, towns across Queensland's Great Dividing Range were nearing the end of their water supply, with the ongoing drought drying up dams and the area declared a State of Fire Emergency in November. Many properties lost water tanks to the bushfires.

To support the local and surrounding communities through this challenging time, a team of local Rotarians introduced an initiative to turn loose gold coins into liquid gold.

"In the café industry, we give water away for free. I was feeling guilty about that, when 70 to 100km away people were about to run out. So, I thought it would be a good idea to encourage a gold coin donation for free table water," said Mark O'Shaughnessy, of the Rotary Club of Boonah and owner of the town's Flavours Café.

The Gold for Liquid Gold initiative started in Mark's café in September and was quickly embraced by the township, with fellow Boonah Rotarian Chris Petherick approaching businesses to get involved.

"We've now got over 20 businesses in Boonah and surrounding towns with carafes on their counters to collect donations. There's even notes in there too; we've had a great response from the community and people have been very generous," Mark said.

The Gold for Liquid Gold initiative has raised close to \$4000 so far, with donations already being sent to the towns of Stanthorpe and Tenterfield. President of the Rotary Club of Boonah, Peter Truer, said the donations are a small way of supporting drought-stricken communities doing it tough.

"We couldn't do much about the water. It's been so long since it rained, tanks all around the area are running out and people just don't have water," Peter said.

"Many properties have lost tanks to bushfires; families who rely on the land don't have an income; and kids are going to school in dirty clothes because they don't have water to do the washing."

Donations from the Gold for Liquid Gold initiative are going towards the purchase of tanks of water for those who need it, food vouchers for families at local supermarkets, and even laundromat vouchers so families can do their washing.

"The drought hasn't finished. Here in Boonah we've had the driest year on record; Charleville is going on seven years of drought. Every little bit helps people in these communities continue through the daily struggles," Peter said.

If you would like to get involved in the Gold for Liquid Gold initiative, contact Mark O'Shaughnessy on 0478 775 774 or flavoursboonah@gmail.com.



Crafters unite

Bat wraps and koala mittens is not something Kiwi Rotarian Pauline Dore, of the Rotary Club of Waimate, ever thought she would find herself sewing.

"Like most of the world, we have watched the devastating bushfires occurring in Australia," Pauline said. "Lives and property have been tragically lost and uncountable numbers of wildlife has perished. But we also understand that many have been saved, and we soon became aware that many koalas and bats, to name just a few, have heinous burn injuries."

And so, Pauline and her fellow club members became part of a global crafting effort as thousands of volunteers unite to knit, crochet and sew shelters, mittens and wraps for animals affected by the crisis.

The Australian-based Animal Rescue Craft Guild put out a call for these products on its Facebook group, which has since amassed some 235,000 members across the globe.

The Rescue Collective, based in Queensland, has partnered with the Animal Rescue Craft Guild to distribute donated items to independent animal carers across the country.

"I put out a call to my fellow Rotarians and members of the Inner Wheel Club of Waimate and our journey of sewing to help out our Australian friends began," Pauline said.

The group of five ladies got busy sewing and have since shipped 30 pairs of koala mittens and 40 bat wraps to Australia. A second shipment is currently underway, due for dispatch this month.

"People have kindly donated material, and many raided their linen cupboards for that soft flannel sheeting that is excellent for these items," Pauline said.

"They are being used by thousands of carers and vets in the community, who, along with the fire fighters, are Australia's unsung heroes. We send a very big thank you to them all."

Patterns for the mittens and wraps can be downloaded from www.facebook.com/groups/arfnrcrafts.

Eat. Drink. Spend.

“We can’t make it rain, but we can use our buying decisions to help businesses in the bush keep the lights on and pay their bills until the drought is finally broken.”

(Stephen Cartwright – NSW Business Chamber CEO)

@spendwiththem campaign helping bushfire affected small businesses

*By Lucy Kinbacher
The Land*

A new social media campaign aimed at supporting towns affected by fire has helped small businesses regain lost income in a matter of hours.

Off the back of the global success of the @buyfromthebush campaign, the new @spendwiththem account is gaining momentum, having established more than 150,000 followers in just a few days.

The campaign was established by bushfire survivor and motivational speaker Turia Pitt, alongside her friend and marketing and content expert Grace McBride, as a way to put money directly back into the pockets of the people and communities of fire-affected towns.

The duo behind the simple idea were inspired by a similar online campaign from Tegan Webber encouraging people to #gowithemptyesky and travel to fire-affected communities.

But given it isn’t safe to travel to these areas yet, Turia said they wanted to make a difference to small businesses now.

Neither of them expected the response they received.

“It has definitely blown up in a way that we didn’t anticipate,” Turia said.

“Grace and I thought that maybe we’d get 1000 followers in our first 24 hours and could build from there. It’s three days later and we’re at 153,000 followers.

“We’re getting offers of help from all over the place to keep this going. We’re so proud of the Aussie spirit and how it’s translated to Spend With Them,” Turia said.

“It was such a simple idea, but it has connected some of these amazing small businesses with Aussies who just want to help and support them.”

While it was a quick approach to make an impact, Turia hopes @spendwiththem can be a way to help business owners into the future too.



"The reality is that these towns and communities are going to need our help long after the initial threat is over," she said.

"Right now, people are mobilised to help in any way they can. But when the crisis is over, and media attention wanes and life goes on, fire-affected communities will only be in the infancy of rebuilding. They will need our support for the long term."

To be featured on the page email spendwiththem@turiapitt.com and include product pictures and instructions on how people can buy online or over the phone.

This is an edited version of an article that first appeared in [The Land \(theland.com.au\)](http://The Land (theland.com.au)).

PICTURED: Fire-affected businesses featured on @spendwiththem: Homewares company White Earth in Huskisson, NSW (@whiteearth); and craft distillery Kangaroo Island Spirits on Kangaroo Island, SA (@kispirits).



PICTURED: Stay Peachy Cafe in Milton, NSW @peachcoffee

@emptyesky campaign to drive visitors to bushfire regions

2AY Albury Wodonga

A campaign developed by two friends in Melbourne encourages 'city folk' to head to fire affected communities and surrounds with an empty esky.

One of the founders of the movement, Eleanor Ballieu, says the idea is to support regional retailers and producers by hitting the road, spending money and filling their eskies with produce to take home.

"We are encouraging everyone to grab an empty esky, do a road trip, and head into an area impacted by the bushfires, when it's safe to do so, and really shock locals; fill up that esky with everything local – wine, food, whatever you want," Eleanor said.

"We've had so many people jump online and take a pledge, including TV host and model Rachael Finch, Emma Hawkins and journalists from all the television networks.

"We've also had businesses coming to us saying, 'Hey, we're still open but all the tourists have left' because they don't want to take the risk of bushfires or they're selling online.

"It's sad. It's something that's hard to put into perspective, because we're not directly experiencing it," Eleanor said.

"But it's been amazing to see the Australian community coming together, taking the pledge and saying, 'Yeh, let's go on a road trip in six months' time and support these people'.

"One girl has even said she will swap her empty esky out for a refrigerated van and stock it full of goods if we can get a Hemsworth to make a pledge!"

You can make a pledge on Instagram @emptyesky or look out for a website that will be developed soon, featuring a list of businesses to support and a road map for 'foodies and adventurers' to hit the regional roads.

Rural retail initiative a shot in the arm for country communities

By Samantha Townsend
The Land

Buy from the bush is powerful in its simplicity.

Bush businesses doing it tough. Consumers encouraged to help.

But it's about so much more than stimulating the coffers of our regional economy in this prolonged dry; it's about boosting morale in the bush.

What started as a hashtag on social media has given hope to bush retailers, with some recording sales that have doubled their annual income in just two weeks.

Grace Brennan, the brainchild behind the @buyfromthebush campaign, says it encourages people to buy locally to help communities affected by dry conditions.

"My husband is a farmer and I have witnessed our little community suffering a lot over the past year or two and wanted to do something," Grace said.

The campaign started when she shared an article on Facebook about how businesses were being affected by drought and encouraged her friends to check out the local boutique in her hometown of Warren.

"A friend of mine said thanks for sharing and that her family was doing a buy from the bush theme for Kris Kringle, which planted the seed," she said.

Grace, who has a background in community development and runs AgDraft, an agtech start-up, created an Instagram page showcasing a few local retailers.

Now, the @buyfromthebush campaign has 199,000 followers on Instagram and 125,000 on Facebook.



TOP TO BOTTOM: A small selection of bush businesses featured on @buyfromthebush: Wattle & Hide in Clermont, Qld (@wattleandhide); Our Cow in Baryulgil, NSW (@ourcowau); Reed & Co. Distillery in Bright, Vic (@reedandcodistillery); Honey & Heidi in Gunnedah, NSW (@honeyandheidi); Cooleebah Gifts in Julia Creek, Qld (@cooleebahgifts). Contents page: The Romantic Clothing Company in Nevertire, NSW (@theromanticclothingco)



And they have just created the @stayinthebush page to get people travelling to regional centres.

"It's working well for a number of reasons, as there is no shortage of creative products being showcased and people enjoy knowing exactly where their money is going and what impact that is having," she said.

Speaking to businesses, Grace said they had made more in two weeks than they had in the last financial year, some more than doubling their annual income.

"The long-term outcomes are incredible as jewellery makers and artists are being found by retailers and wholesalers who want to stock their stuff," she said.

"One business has gone from 3000 followers to 7000, that's an extra 4000 potential customers in the long-term.

"They are building their capacity to leverage social media into the future, which is exciting and it's creating opportunity to access new markets without the huge expense."

Grace says once the drought breaks, and it will, they want to keep businesses open.

"I created the page one morning after I heard an interview between the Prime Minister and a journalist, and what wasn't being talked about was the need to keep rural communities going," she said.

"We always hear about farmers and agriculture businesses, but what's at stake if those ag businesses decline, is those other businesses that feed off them.

"Most people have great faith that the Australian ag industry will keep driving efficiencies and somehow survive this exceptional drought.

"But people are leaving town and doors are closing so we need to take action to stop that from happening in the short-term."

Check out @buyfromthebush on Instagram or Facebook for your next purchase.

This is an edited version of an article that first appeared in The Land (theland.com.au).



Head for the hills

Bushfires swept through South Australia's Adelaide Hills on Friday, December 20, impacting many in the wine industry.

The images are shocking and the stories devastating to hear.

Having grown up in Adelaide, Vinomofu CEO and co-founder Justin Dry (pictured) says it's a region close to his heart.

"I've spent a lot of time in the region and drinking its amazing wines. I'm also lucky enough to consider many of its residents close friends.

"We wanted to help immediately, but also over the longer term as

these families, businesses and communities rebuild. To help in the short term we've set up our Adelaide Hills Bushfire Appeal – an online campaign where we buy directly from the affected producers in the first instance, and then donate 100 per cent of the profits from the sales."

At the time of print \$16,250 had been raised.

"To help in the long term, I'll be visiting the Adelaide Hills region in the next few weeks to catch up with as many of the impacted producers as possible. We will sit down and

work out what they need to rebuild going forward and how we can help make that possible," JD said.

To assist other wine-lovers wanting to do their part for producers, JD and the Vinomofu team have compiled a list of wineries that have been impacted, including links to their sites and fundraising campaigns.

"Please donate and/or stock up on wine directly from these great producers and share the list as widely as you can. The region and people need you and it will help tremendously," JD said.

- Tilbrook Estate – James and wife Annabelle lost their winery, vineyard and pretty much every last bottle of wine they had, so the best way to help is to donate to www.gofundme.com/f/save-tilbrook-estate-wines
- Vinteloper – www.vinteloper.com.au/collections
- Barristers Block Premium Wines – barristers-block.myshopify.com
- Tomich Wines – www.tomich.com.au/wines
- Golding Wines – www.goldingwines.com.au/our-shop
- Anderson Hill – andersonhill.worldsecuringsystems.com/winery
- Bird In Hand Winery – www.birdinhand.com.au/shop
- Nova Vita Wines – www.novavitawines.com.au
- ArtWine Estate – www.artwine.com.au/Wines
- Turon Wines – www.turonwines.com.au/cellar
- Geoff Weaver – www.geoffweaver.com.au/sales/buy-direct
- Simon Tolley Wines – www.simontolley.com.au/buy
- Petaluma Wine – www.petaluma.com.au/Shop/All-Wines
- Henschke – www.henschke.com.au/store
- New Era Vineyards – www.neweravineyards.com.au/w/cate.../our-crafted-wines
- Riposte: Wines by Tim Knapstein & Son – timknapstein.com.au/collections/all-wines
- Emmeline Wines – contact them directly through www.facebook.com/emmelinewines



Colouring for the cause



Sunshine Coast illustrator Kassi Isaac has put together a bundle of beautiful Australian colouring pages to raise funds for bushfire relief.

The pages feature a wide range of Australian wildlife and can be purchased and downloaded from her website either for print or straight onto a tablet. One hundred per cent of profits from the bundles will go towards a number of bushfire relief appeals, including Wires Wildlife Rescue, the Salvation Army, the Rural Fire Brigade in both Queensland and NSW, Foodbank Australia, Wildlife Rescue South Coast, Australia Zoo Wildlife Warriors and Red Cross Australia.

Kassi is encouraging everyone to upload their finished pictures to social media with the hashtags #kassisaaccolouringgang and #2020australianbushfires to raise awareness and encourage more people to donate.

"I've illustrated the pages to have more of an educational focus, not just pretty pictures on a page," Kassi said. "There is a whole page dedicated to butterfly and insect species, including their names, that have been affected by the bushfires. I have also tried to bring in a human element, like the koala as a firefighter."

As ongoing support for bushfire relief, Kassi will be releasing bundles of new colouring pages monthly, focusing on Australian/wildlife themes.

If you or your club would like to purchase the 2020 Australian Bushfires Colouring Page bundles for a local school, library or community group, Kassi can be contacted via hello@kassisaac.com or visit www.kassisaac.com.

The. Long. Dry.

“There is nothing so oppressive and utterly subduing as a drought. It is not a fierce calamity, not a dreaded blow, nor any brief struggle... it is a torturing Titan, overwhelming and resistless, but slow and monotonous in its destruction.”
(William Ranken – The Dominion of Australia, 1874)



PICTURED: Year 5/6 at St John's Parish School in Trangie were at the heart of the nation-wide #BustTheDust event to help lift drought-stricken spirits. (Photo: Zaarkacha Marlan)

Dancing up a storm: Trangie community #BustTheDust

By Zaarkacha Marlan
Narromine News

Students across Australia danced up a storm in December in an effort to bust the drought.

However, it was 19 students in Year 5/6 at St John's Parish School in Trangie, NSW, who were at the heart of the storm.

The class at St Johns came up with the idea of a simultaneous 'bust the dust' dance event that took place at 1pm on Friday, December 13.

Year 5 student Isabella Brennan said plans for the event had begun a couple of months prior and they had been practising their dance moves "every day".

"We were just reading and analysing some poems and we came across the song 'Raindance' by Sara Storer and we just thought why don't we hold our own raindance," she said.

The students created the #BustTheDust dance to give all school communities an inclusive way to show support for rural areas. The class hoped to get the 18 schools in their diocese involved, but after the release of their viral Facebook video, more than 600 schools across the nation took part.

Isabella encouraged people to "get out there and keep dancing", hopeful it would rain again, and thanked their teacher Emma Wilson.

"She's the best teacher, and we wouldn't have been able to do this without her."

Ms Wilson said the drought has had a huge impact on everyone in Trangie.

"It's incredibly important and I think children are often forgotten in the middle of a drought," she said.

"Often people don't ask what they're seeing, what they're noticing and how they're feeling."

Liverpool West Rotary visit supports drought-stricken shire



PICTURED: President of the Rotary Club of Liverpool West Sam Capra mans a free community barbecue held at Tom Perry Park. (Photo: Zaarkacha Marlan)

By Zaarkacha Marlan
Narromine News

Rotarians from the Rotary Club of Liverpool West, NSW, made the five-hour journey west to Narromine in December to help bring some good cheer and support to the shire.

The Rotarians visited Narromine and Trangie between December 12 and 15 to spend locally and make some generous donations to the district.

During their visit the group met with as many people as possible to help gain a better understanding of how the drought is affecting farmers and small communities.

They also donated books and lolly bags to the schools in Narromine and Trangie and made a donation to the school for drought emergency funds.

The group were in Trangie to watch students #BustTheDust (see left) and visited a number of farms in the shire.

To help bring the community together, they hosted a free community barbecue at Tom Perry Park, where they got to talk to a number of locals and hear about life on the land.

Rotary treats 744 school kids to a day at the zoo



PICTURED: Children from the Wellington district enjoying their day out at the zoo – most cited the cheetahs and meerkats as their favourite animals.

UPDATE

The Rotary Club of Northbridge has since held two bucket appeals at the Northbridge Plaza to raise funds for the bushfire crisis. The November appeal raised a total of \$15,400 and was distributed by the Rotary Club of Nambucca Heads, NSW, to locals who had lost their homes. The January appeal raised more than \$12,500, with a further \$5000 donated by the Northbridge Probus Club. More fundraising activities are currently in the pipeline.

The Rotary Clubs of Northbridge and Wellington, NSW, recently embarked on a joint project to support the families of drought-affected communities in Western NSW. Launched on September 11, 2019, and run over a seven-week period, Wellington district's 744 primary school kids were all treated to a day at the Taronga Western Plains Zoo in Dubbo, including a barbecue lunch.

Rotarians from Northbridge in Sydney drove to the zoo to connect with their fellow Rotarians and help man the barbecue.

"The children of drought-affected communities are suffering as well," said president of the Rotary Club of Northbridge Peter Antaw. "Most of them don't understand the financial and extreme pressures their parents are going through.

"The families are anxious about their future, but there is also great

determination to keep their communities alive."

Australia is experiencing one of its most severe droughts on record, with areas in NSW facing the prospect of running out of water by mid-2020.

The Burrendong Dam is now at 4.5 per cent capacity and dwindling rapidly.

The crisis is severely impacting the Wellington area and special treats like a visit to the zoo are just not possible for many locals and their families.

Three thousand muesli bars supplied free by Nestlé, along with 744 sausage sandwiches and a cold drink were enjoyed by children of the district, which includes regional small towns such as Geurie, Mumbil, Stuart Town and Euchareena.

Channel 7 Prime TV was on-hand to film the event, while the clubs' presidents were interviewed by ABC Morning Radio.

"The kids thoroughly enjoyed their day, with most of them citing the cheetahs and meerkats as their favourites," Peter said.

Mayor of Dubbo Regional Ben Shields and Wellington Primary Headmaster Daryl Thompson also attended the event, with both congratulating the Rotary clubs for identifying children as the hidden victims of the drought.

President of the Rotary Club of Wellington, Greg Hart, thanked Northbridge Rotary and the Rotary Australia Benevolent Society for their generous contributions to the project, and for driving up from Sydney to help at the barbecues. Without Northbridge, Wellington would not have taken on this project.



Coonamble Drought Buster Dollars

In August 2018, the Rotary Club of Coonamble, NSW, realised the need to assist the farmers, workers and businesses whose income is being seriously affected by the current drought.

The club and members from other organisations, such as the Lions Club, Quota Club, Country Women's Association, Red Cross, the Coonamble Chamber of Commerce, local resilience officer, the Coonamble Shire Council and *Coonamble Times*, decided to form an alliance to raise funds and distribute to needy residents in the shire.

It was decided to produce Coonamble Drought Buster Dollars, which can only be spent in any of the 80 business in Coonamble, of which all businesses could redeem the cash from the Shire Council. The dollars are produced by the council at no cost and the administration is also cost-free.

Coonamble club member Keith Glover says they have been assisted by many Rotary clubs and organisations, including the Rotary clubs of Liverpool, North Gosford, Port Macquarie Sunrise, Carlingford and Southern Mitchell, along with the Evans Head Chamber of Commerce, Coonamble Lions Club, funds from the Chanel 9 Drought Relief Fund through RAWCS, Rouse Hill Probus Club and the Eastern branch of the Recreational Vehicle Fellowship of Rotarians, along with other clubs, organisations and individuals.

"The amount that has been kindly donated up until January 16 is in excess of \$165,000, of which more than \$145,000 in Drought Buster Dollars has been distributed across the Coonamble Shire," Keith said. "Fifty-eight business have benefited from the dollars being spent locally, such as supermarkets, butchers, fuel outlets, hardware stores, retail businesses and more.

"Just because we had some rainfall, we must not be complacent, because this drought is still with us and people are really suffering in silence. We hope that we can assist until it really breaks.

"The alliance would like to sincerely thank all those organisations and people that have been so generous and assisted so far."

NSW Government and Rotary help deliver \$1M hay donation to farmers

Long overdue rain and a generous fodder delivery has brought a smile to the faces of landholders at Guyra and Wollomombi, NSW, with farmers welcoming the arrival of a truckload of hay, thanks to an anonymous donor and a \$492,500 State Government transport subsidy.

Northern Tablelands MP and Minister for Agriculture Adam Marshall and Deputy Premier John Barilaro joined local Rotary club members to welcome the first of many truckloads of fodder made available by the donation, as it rolled onto the property of Black Mountain farmer Matthew Friend.

Mr Marshall said the government's contribution to cover all the transport costs meant Rotary was able to put the full \$1 million towards buying hay.

"Late last year a generous donor gave \$1 million to Rotary to benefit cattle producers struggling through drought," Mr Marshall said.

"The result of that gesture has now landed exactly where it's needed and will go a long way to easing the pressure on farmers who are still in dire need of stock feed due to the prolonged dry.

"Rotary used strict guidelines to identify individual farmers living in areas of intense drought and has provided each one with enough hay to carry them over for a month. Eighty-two farmers in NSW will receive a truckload of hay and up to 40 in Queensland.

"I'm pleased we've been able to do our part by contributing through the Donated Fodder Transport Scheme, meaning instead of almost half the \$1 million donation being spent on transport costs, Rotary has been able to use the full amount to purchase hay for those in need.

"It's turned what would have been a \$1 million program into almost \$1.5 million worth of support for farmers."

Rotary Australia World Community Service Ltd (RAWCS) is managing the funds and the purchase and distribution of hay.

Mr Marshall said the subsidy was part of a broad range of support available to assist farmers and their families.

"Even though parts of our region have enjoyed considerable rain since late December, there is still a long way to go before the drought is broken," he said.

"Alongside the Donated Fodder Transport Scheme there are a number of assistance packages available to help farmers during this time and I urge those who haven't already to contact the Rural Assistance Authority to see what they may be able to access."

For more information, visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/droughthub

From city to country

Passionate Trundle Central School principal John Southon is on a mission to help the children and families affected by drought in his long-suffering town.

The small community in Central Western NSW is struggling to survive, with many farms bone dry, businesses shutting down and families forced to leave. Of the 300 students who once attended the school, only 105 remain and more are leaving every year.

But John is determined to not let the drought break his town.

In an interview with The Project's Pat Abboud aired on October 7, John told of how the mental health aspect of the drought can have an enormous effect on the kids and is often hidden.

"We socialise our kids in the country, and especially our boys, to be stoic and not to say that I'm suffering, not to say things are bad."

"What I've got to do as a school principal is walk through the school and give those kids the impression that this is the best day of their lives. I've got to make sure that kid thinks they're the most important kid in the world.

"I want to show the kids that, hey, this thing is not going to beat us, we're going to challenge it," John told Pat.

And the community is rallying behind him, extending a helping hand

to the drought-ravaged town.

Following a heartbreaking interview with Australian radio broadcaster Steve Price, Smart Repair Australia director Michael Cross contacted John and rallied his friends in the industry to raise \$40,000 for the town.

This is not the beginning of the Trundle story, however. An interview with Richard Glover, aired on ABC radio in August 2018, sparked the interest of friends of Rotary Karen Rivers and Norma Gillespie.

"A life lived in Sydney is surrealistic in many ways; busy with the repetitious daily routines of showering, a cup of tea, teeth cleaning, dressing from a selection of clothing, loading the washing, filling pet bowls, packing a lunch box, a drink of water and off out for the day," Karen said.

"In contrast, life in rural drought areas is busy with repetitious daily routines of no shower, no cup of tea, out on the farm hand-feeding starving animals over 10-hour days. Children helping before school and some until 9pm at night after school.

So, Karen contacted John to see how Rotary could help. John had already installed washing machines at the school for farming families with no water to wash clothes and hot showers with towels and toiletries for kids to have a scrub.



Karen then put in a call to Rural Aid and a plan was hatched to gift water via water carters filling two tanks at each farmhouse with safe drinking water for free. Rural Aid covers the cost of over \$700 per farm fill.

"This has proved a huge relief to the thousands of farming families now able to turn on the tap for a quick shower, to wash their kids, and to prepare meals," Karen said.

Rural Aid donated a further 18 loads of water to the Trundle farming community before Christmas last year.

"This water carting gifting from Rural Aid has extended across the

state, so an enormous amount of public donations have been directed towards it," Karen said.

Support for the town continues to grow. Ecostore donated 5000 loads of environmentally friendly washing powder, while Bushmans Tanks donated a 10,000 litre water tank (filled by Rural Aid) and pump to run the school's showers and washing machines.

AMGROW donated organic soil and plant foods to restore veggie gardens and an orchard project undertaken by the Rotary Club of Pambula, NSW, is irrigated by a second water tank donated and filled by Bunnings. Plants for the orchard were purchased from Parkes Nursery and Rural Aid sent a team to help prepare the ground and infrastructure.

The Rotary Club of Preston, Vic, provided groceries for a three-day pop-up giveaway stall, held at the school before Christmas. The club also provided a free load of water for farming families and purchased tools, a welder and a sand blasting unit to expand the school's school-work program for 2020.

Two thousand dollars' worth of Woolworths gift cards helped the tuckshop feed students, 1000 chocolate balls donated by Lindt proved a yummy treat, while hundreds of tubes of organic hand cream donated by Dalan d'Olive Australia is providing relief for dry, cracked farming hands.

To help address mental health concerns for the school children, a lovely Labrador puppy, Ajax, joined the school staff as a therapy dog.

"He has made a huge impact, as animals give unconditional love and calm children within moments," Karen said.

Music is also great therapy. Downtown Music Sydney gifted five guitar stands, loads of strings for different guitars and ukulele, and instruments for younger children, while Rural Aid's Gift of Music program donated \$11,359 worth

of instruments and equipment, including 16 acoustic guitars and cases, a new iPad, three new tuners, an electric guitar, an amplifier, cables, guitar straps, a Yamaha keyboard, 25 ukuleles, six music stands, a keyboard stand and six large cartons of assorted Lego packs.

"A fabulous new band from Trundle Central School has been formed, which is fun for all as practising at home means families share the lovely music being made by their kids," Karen said.

The team and volunteers behind Dress for Success Sydney worked hard to collect 1000 items of women's clothing that were shipped to Trundle Central School and gifted to the community.

The very essential socks and undies for dads, along with new clothes and toys for kids, were provided for every family in Trundle Central School, gifted by Thread Together Limited in Sydney. CEO Greg Fisher personally visited the school to present the gifts. Thread Together also provided children's clothes and toys for school children in the small village

of Bribbaree, while beautiful babies and toddlers clothing, designed and created by Josie Vallelonga of twothree.two, were gifted to the children's younger siblings.

Thread Together further donated new school shoes and clothes for kids at Trundle Central School to give them a fresh start for the 2020 school year and Andy from Andlyn Transport Grenfell brought loads of women's gym gear, kid's toys and sports gear to Bribbaree in December.

Red Cross crafters made gorgeous woollen teddies, which were donated to Trundle Central School's younger kids as cuddly friends.

Support for the community continues as they battle through another long, hot summer.

"We must never be complacent; we must not be seagulls flying in gifting then flying away. These communities will need continual help for many years," Karen said.

To support Trundle Central School and its community, phone 02 6892 1303 or email Trundle-c.school@det.nsw.edu.au



PICTURED: Members of the Rotary Club of Pambula swapped the beach for the bush when they visited Trundle to lend a hand at the school's working bee.

Lane Cove Goes West

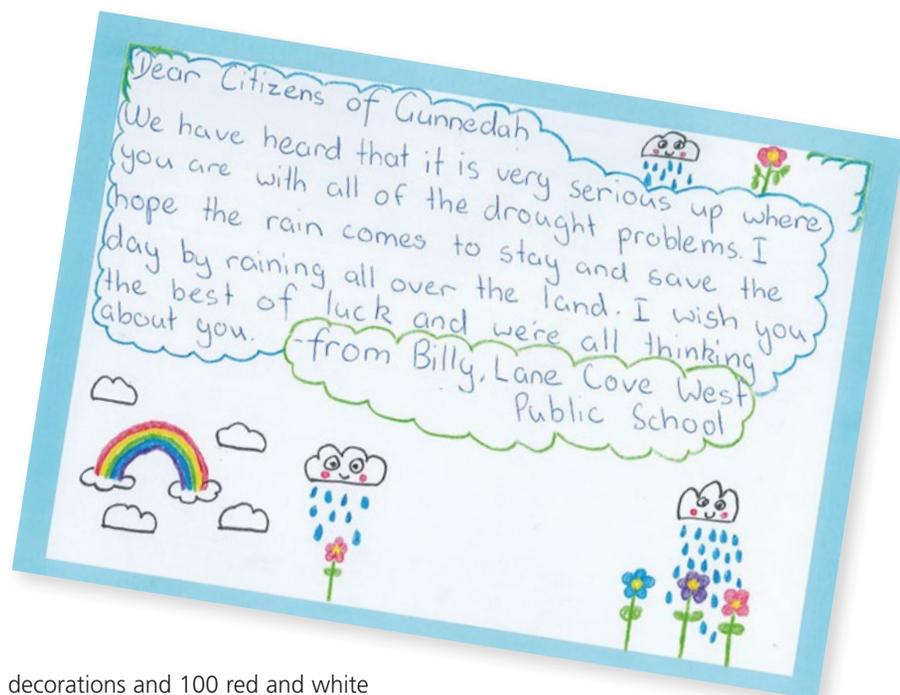
Over a weekend in mid-November, four members of the Rotary Club of Lane Cove in Sydney, NSW, along with local Councillor Andrew Zbik and his family, made the epic five-hour journey to sister city Gunnedah, NSW. Club members Craig Brody, Tania Mace, Lalitha Warren and Patty Wilson-Cust were keen to develop a better understanding of the ongoing drought, as were Andrew and Bronwyn.

The visit was prompted by an existing municipal link, in response to the generous financial support fundraised by Lane Cove residents and businesses sent directly to the Rotary Club of Gunnedah West.

On their arrival, guests were met by 10 members of the Rotary Club of Gunnedah West and were officially welcomed by Deputy Mayor Rob Hooke. After a quick morning tea and exchange of gifts, the group boarded a bus and made tracks for lunch at Mullaley Pub.

Gifts brought by the Lane Cove Rotarians included letters written by students from Lane Cove West Public School. The letters were written as part of the school's focus on drought and associated issues.

Included were Christmas



decorations and 100 red and white tea towels indicating Gunnedah is right up there with the top cities in the world, donated by founder of 'In The Cove' social media platform, Jacky Barker.

Following lunch, the group visited Glenrowan, a property owned and operated by Andrew and Georgie Gavel.

"Andrew and his children joined us on the bus to show and explain their drought strategies," Tania Mace, of the Rotary Club of Lane Cove, said. "We hoped for a better understanding by our city club members of the long-term effects from drought on the community. It was a first-hand shock to witness the devastation of bone-dry creek beds, crop-less fields and handfeeding stock."

The careful driving skills of event organiser Phil meant the group took a direct route via Garawilla Creek and the neighbour's property to the holding of Justin and Donna Grant. Likewise, Justin showed and explained how they are coping with the drought.

"Both farming families have made tough decisions, but gave positive stories of how they are managing in this prolonged drought," Craig said.

The short cut meant the group arrived at the newly renovated Tambar Springs Hotel in plenty of time to support a local business, where a few extras from Gunnedah

and local farms joined them for a tasty barbecue buffet.

Following Sunday morning breakfast at Verdict Café (where the combined clubs' horde filled the café) the Lane Cove guests pumped some more dollars into the local economy, with a spot of Christmas shopping at gift and homewares boutique Goodness & Gracious.

The group then paid a visit to the farm of David and Ros Torrens, before moving on to morning tea at Lake Keepit Sailing Club; a spectacular venue given racing was being held in the 0.13 per cent puddle of the lake!

"The whole landscape and the personal stories of our farming hosts made a real impact on the group," Phil Hutchinson of the Rotary Club of Gunnedah West said. "Our Lane Cove guests departed with a much greater understanding of the difficulties of this drought and lasting connections and friendships have been made."

More than 80 letters from Lane Cove West Public School have since been delivered to Gunnedah farmers. Each envelope contained a cover letter from the Rotary Club of Gunnedah West, incorporating the cover letter from Lane Cove West Public School, a letter from a student and in most cases a tea towel.

Special packages containing chains of waterdrop Christmas

Hi!

My name is Grace, I am currently in Year 6 at Lane Cove West Public School. In school we have been learning about the drought in Australia. We have learnt that the drought has been going on for a long time. We also were told that our farmers work hard to produce our crops and dairy products for us to eat.

When I was younger, I always wanted to own a farm and live on it; how nice, I thought, seeing the sunset every day and having your own pigs, cows, horses, etc.

But when I realised you have to get up early every day and actually work hard all day, my dream slowly faded away. Even though I still like the idea of my own farm, I highly doubt I could do the work, which is why I am so amazed that you do it every day and that shows persistence.

Living on a farm with livestock on a land with little amount of water for crops shows that you do care and that you will never give up. Especially during our drought.

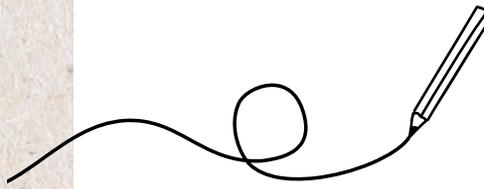
Living in a drought that has been going on for three years and 10 months in these conditions, it must be tough and definitely not easy. I would have quit by now and sold my farm, but you haven't, which I think takes courage and patience to still be pushing hard and taking care of your crops and animals shows you're not a person who gives up.

And I thought taking care of my dog was hard, I mean walking her every second day is sort of annoying, but I definitely can't complain about how hard I think taking care of a dog is, because you have to take care of more than one type of animal, which need different food and different needs.

At school we all are thinking of you and how hard you guys work. All of us here are always being amazed about what you guys do in your everyday lives. We all have hope for you that the drought stops in the very near future and that you can take a nice long relaxing break. And I hope you know how much we appreciate what you do for us.

You have all of our respect for what you do. Never forget you guys are heroes!

***We know you are living tough,
But what you're doing is enough,
Never give up,
Because we know you are tough,
Keep doing what you are, because...
It's enough!***



 PICTURED: Members of the Rotary Club of Lane Cove Craig Brodey, left, Lalitha Warren and Tania Mace visiting the third Gunnedah property of the day, owned by David and Ros Torrens.



tree decorations were given to the Gavel and Grant families in thanks for opening up their farms.

As a follow up to the original visit, Craig and Tania returned to Gunnedah just before Christmas to deliver a package of \$1550 worth of gift vouchers. These gift vouchers were coordinated by Lane Cove Rotary member Lalitha Warren from Fisher & Paykel staff, who chose the drought situation in Gunnedah as their Christmas charity to support in 2019. These vouchers were distributed with Pamper Packs by the Country Women's Association network.

Support for drought-affected families in Central Western NSW



PICTURED: Wendy Kilborn, left, daughter Alysha, Brian Morrison, Col Tyquin, Craig Cameron and Dale Wilford.

The Rotary Club of Milton-Ulladulla, NSW, arranged a Christmas gathering for the farming district of Tallimba, a small town about 40km to the west of Wyalong in the Central West of NSW. The farming community in this area is struggling to live in an environment that is almost without water.

In a good season, the farms in this area grow wheat and barley and run sheep for wool. It is now over three years since they have had a reasonable crop of wheat and the sheep are being sold off because they can't afford to handfeed them.

The event was organised by Dale Wilford and a shoebox appeal was initiated by Ali Tyquin, while president-elect Leonie Smith managed to get 50 free unisex Christmas showbags for the Tallimba Drought Relief Appeal through Absolute Showbags, including free postage. With the help of others from the Milton-Ulladulla district, the event received a welcome boost from

local Wendy Kilborn, who was able to secure a range of items from Milton-Ulladulla businesses to also be donated to families.

Rotarians liaised with members of the Rotary Club of West Wyalong, District 9700, and friends made the 500km trek out to Tallimba in late November in several vehicles, including one truck that travelled from Ulladulla taking gifts of food and water for families and Christmas presents for the children, along with a \$3000 donation to be given to the community in the form of gift vouchers for local shops.

More than 100 shoeboxes filled with children's gifts were donated, mainly by members of the Rotary Club of Milton-Ulladulla. Wendy collected cartons of pantry items, pet food and toys, cleaning accoutrements and new children's clothing available for the families to select, all donated by the community of Milton-Ulladulla.

Four pallet loads of clear spring

water in 10-litre containers were delivered for use in the homes of local farmers and the Tallimba primary school, where the tap water is brown and unpalatable.

A barbecue hosted by the Rotary Club of West Wyalong was much appreciated by more than 150 people, who turned up to enjoy the Christmas spirit and a screening of the movie *Aladdin*, with loads of popcorn for the younger family members.

Rotary Club of Milton-Ulladulla vice-president Brian Morrison said it was a heart-warming occasion.

"Everyone was overjoyed that people from the coast would come so far to do this," Brian said.

"The simple fact that other parts of NSW are thinking about distant farming communities struggling in this very severe drought gave them a boost. It was truly wonderful to see the people of Tallimba smiling and happy, when you know they have not had much to smile about for some years."

Give.

District & club appeals

Several Rotary districts and clubs have also established projects that are ready and able to accept donations:

- East Gippsland Rotary Fire Aid
- South Australia Bushfire Relief
- Queensland Bushfires Relief Appeal
- Western Australia Bushfire Relief Project
- Yorke Peninsula Bushfire Relief Fund
- Macleay Valley Bushfire Relief Fund
- Armidale & Northern Tablelands Bushfire Relief Appeal
- Taree & Mid Coast NSW Bushfire Relief Appeal
- Bushfire traumatized farmers in need
- Queensland Bushfire Relief Project

Visit rawcs.org.au/disasters

RAWCS launches Rotary Bushfires National Appeal

With the approval of the Australian district governors, Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS) has announced its Rotary Bushfires National Appeal, aimed at helping communities affected by the recent fires rebuild and get back on their feet.

Launched on January 3, district governors are currently organising an appeal committee with representatives from each district impacted by the bushfires.

The committee will be responsible for distributing appeal funds to bushfire victims and will decide how funds will be shared with the existing Rotary Australia Benevolent Society (RABS) bushfire projects (see left) as well as those areas not covered by RAWCS projects.

RAWCS National Communications Manager John Stockbridge says the committee has been advised to take a second response approach to the distribution of funds.

"The first, most pressing response is to feed, clothe and accommodate bushfire victims, which is best facilitated by Red Cross, the Salvos, Vinnies, etc., who are geared to do this," John said.

"Rotary clubs take longer to donate in any appeal, so the first response is usually over when Rotary has funds available to spend. Rotary's support of fire victims will be second response – replacing infrastructure, buildings, sheds, fences, etc. – teams of Rotarians working with local clubs where a national disaster has occurred."

The appeal committee will also establish a process by which victims can seek support from the appeal funds and ensure funds only reach eligible victims.

To date, the appeal has raised \$555,784, with a further CAN\$36,000 collected by Disaster Aid Canada on behalf of RAWCS and additional funding expected to be received from our New Zealand friends at RNZWCS.

"The Australian bushfires are an unprecedented catastrophe of major proportions and Rotary and Rotarians can play an active role in getting the affected families and small businesses back on their feet," John said. "Through our Rotary clubs we can quickly identify those in most need, including animal sanctuaries, and bring our funds to bear in a manner that will be of most benefit to those families and communities."

To donate to the Rotary Bushfires National Appeal, visit rawcs.org.au

Donating in New Zealand

Donations in New Zealand can be made through Rotary New Zealand World Community Service (RNZWCS Limited).

Four donation options are available, quoting Activity No. 011:

- Internet Banking: 03 1702 0192208 01
- Paypal: www.rnzwcs.org
- Give a Little: givealittle.co.nz/cause/bushfire-appeal
- Cheque: RNZWCS Limited (Rotary New Zealand), PO Box 20309, Christchurch 8543

Receipts will be issued for tax deductible purposes.

