Rural Resilience Program Report Card
July 2014 – June 2015

The Rural Resilience Program (RRP) was formally launched in February 2015. As government’s role in service provision changes, the need for the primary industries sector to build personal and business resilience and adapt to adverse events in a positive direction has never been more critical.

A Rural Support Program has been a feature of DPI for many years with all staff employed on very temporary contracts providing little opportunity for strategic long term planning around capacity building of farming communities to be more engaged in risk management, preparedness and less reliant on government support. To address this gap, a permanent RRP team of Rural Resilience Officers was established to ensure farming communities are well connected and viable with additional RSWs contracted to meet critical needs as they arise. The current RRP team are strategically based in rural towns as indicated on the map but provide services to farmer communities across many regions.

This inaugural annual report card creates a benchmark for measuring impact into the future. (NB. Some staff were employed for eight months or less).

What is our take on ‘Resilience’?… resilience is a process wherein individuals adapt and move forward in a positive direction despite experiencing significant adversity

RRP’s role is to Listen, Learn and Link to Create opportunities for farming communities

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au
# Key Outputs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FARMING COMMUNITIES AND STAKEHOLDERS ARE WELL CONNECTED</th>
<th>INFORMING GOVERNMENT ABOUT FARMING COMMUNITY NEEDS</th>
<th>FACILITATING PREPAREDNESS &amp; RECOVERY ACTIVITIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>231 workshops</strong> developed and delivered in partnership with a range of stakeholders that built <strong>personal</strong> and <strong>business resilience</strong></td>
<td><strong>Government</strong> is well informed about farming community needs through <strong>91 issues briefings and reports</strong></td>
<td><strong>148 drought-specific</strong> activities delivered within <strong>vulnerable</strong> farming communities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>17 Rural Support Networks</strong> established or strengthened to improve <strong>linkages</strong>, <strong>sharing resources and coordination</strong></td>
<td>Coordinated <strong>11 Minister</strong> and other VIP visits to regional farming communities</td>
<td>Personal and business <strong>support</strong> provided to farming communities during and after <strong>4 adverse events</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>11 news stories and information resources</strong> developed</td>
<td><strong>3 surveys provided key input to Policy development</strong></td>
<td><strong>3 preparedness</strong> initiatives developed</td>
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**Connected with 52 stakeholder organisations** to deliver **400+ partnership activities** to meet identified **farming community needs**
## Key Activities and Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHALLENGE/PROBLEM</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>KEY OUTCOMES</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
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</table>
| Significant decline in profit from smaller farms                                 | Options workshop to help farmers identify different business opportunities | » Provide information and pathways for farmers to seek different industry options for their farms.  
» Connect farmers with industry specific specialists, support services and agency staff.  
» Connect farmers with other farmers.                                               | Griffith                         |
| Poor capacity of farmers to manage their farm business                           | Farm Office Efficiency Workshops               | » Improved understanding of how to maintain business records                  | Warren, Gilgandra and Nyngan    |
| Financial stress as a result of the drought                                       | Back to Business Basics Training Program       | » Improve understanding of developing a business plan and budget.            | Wee Waa, Walgett and Baradine   |
| Farm, infrastructure and personal stress resulting from the Hunter Storm Event    | Storm recovery and outreach program            | » Provided information and connected over 200 primary producers with support services including the Rural Assistance Authority, Farm Household Allowance and Rural Financial Counsellors.  
» Improved recovery of agricultural industries and individual businesses including Aquaculture. | Hunter                           |
| Increased financial pressure on farm businesses                                  | Phoenix Workshops                              | » Improved skills in business management, property planning and computer skills.  
» Strengthened community networks and support.                                      | Bourke                           |
| Minimising the impact of natural disasters on farming businesses                 | Disaster Leadership Project                    | » Improved skills in leadership, emergency management and planning.          | Clarence Valley                 
» Improved connections within farming communities to share planning ideas.         |
### Key Activities and Outcomes

**RRP Projects Supported that Increased Access to Opportunities to Build Knowledge, Capabilities and Skills in Personal Resilience**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Challenge/Problem</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Key Outcomes</th>
<th>Location</th>
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| Accessibility of support services in remote farming communities | ‘Spring into Spring’ – Wellness Day at Monolon Station | » Improved awareness and connections between farmers and services providers.  
» Increased participation in health checks conducted by the Royal Flying Doctor Service. | White Cliffs |
| Poor health of farming men | Mens Health Workshops | » Improved understanding of men's health and strategies to improve health (e.g., regular health check-ups, work/life balance, etc.) | Various locations across the Riverina, South Coast and Central West |
| Personal stress and poor health as a result of severe drought conditions | Pillaga Rural Women’s Retreat | » An opportunity for farming women to have a break from the farm and an enjoyable weekend.  
» Provide information and tools to help farming women to manage adversity.  
» Build a network of farming women to support each other. | Pillaga – participants from Warrumbungle, Connamble, Walgett and Narrabri |
| Social isolation and poor women’s health and wellbeing | Connecting Women in the Landscape forum | » Built capacity of farming women to share their stories and provide information and tools to support each other.  
» Improved awareness of women’s health issues and support services available. | Tumut |
| Unsafe farm practices and poor communication amongst farming youth | Inter-schools Farm Safety Day | » Provided information and strategies on safe farm practices, healthy communication and health.  
» Skin checks which detected two melanomas. | Merriwa |
| Social isolation and inability of farmers to share success stories and information | ABC Open Workshop | » Improved skills in storytelling, social media and video production.  
» Profile and celebration of agriculture across a remote area of NSW.  
» Improved connections within farming communities. | Bourke |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>52 STAKEHOLDER ORGANISATIONS</th>
<th>400+ PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kyogle Shire, North Coast TAFE</td>
<td>Women in Leadership program, funding received through grant submission for $15,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atron, Northern Cooperative Meat Company, Women in Dairy</td>
<td>Northern Rivers Women's Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Granite Borders Landcare</td>
<td>Low Stress Conversations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Cooperative Meat Company, North Coast LLS, DPI</td>
<td>Low Stress Stock Handling, Low Stress Conversations workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>CWA Kyogle</td>
<td>Chainsaw training</td>
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<tr>
<td>SES, Clarence Valley Shire</td>
<td>Natural Disaster Leadership training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP)</td>
<td>Riverina Suicide Prevention Group workshop, Narrandera; Mental Health First Aid Course</td>
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<tr>
<td>South East LLS</td>
<td>Local Leadership Program participation in three multi-day workshops; Various livestock marketing workshops; Formation of Seasonal Conditions Advisory Group; Development of the Tablelands Rural Services Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office of Environment and Heritage</td>
<td>Climate change adaptation workshops, Yass and Goulburn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central West LLS</td>
<td>Develop joint response with DPI in preparation for El Nino conditions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holmes Sacket Consulting</td>
<td>Developing risk management and grazing profit workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP)</td>
<td>Grenfell Men's Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laurinne Campbell</td>
<td>Mobile skin mental health clinics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red Cross</td>
<td>Natural Disaster Recover Workshop Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centacare</td>
<td>Craig Hamilton Mental health nights at Coolah and Dunedoo.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warrumbungle Shire Mayor’s Bushfire Recovery Appeal (Bushfire Community Rejuvenation and Renewal Fund)</td>
<td>Assisted with recovery processes, discussion groups to build knowledge and understanding of bushfire impacts and reassure victims. Dr Rob Gordon recovery expert</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central West LLS</td>
<td>Feeding livestock in dry times workshop with health checks workshops; Winter legume field days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tocal College</td>
<td>Back to Business Basics course</td>
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<tr>
<td>MPES</td>
<td>Presentation of NSW Recovery Plan, tools, etc</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richmond PRA and Centacare</td>
<td>First Aid course</td>
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<tr>
<td>LLS – Hunter and North West; Sustainable North West – partnership between LLS North West and Tamworth Regional Landcare</td>
<td>HRSSN, Weeds workshop, beef cost of production, organic farming, sheep health and nutrition, Emergency management recovery events, Workplace support skills (RAMHP), sustainable morning teas, AgQuip Field days,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Financial Counselling Services</td>
<td>Storm recovery events, HRSSN, general referral for farmers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP)</td>
<td>Community/workplace support skills, Merriwa Interschool’s farm safety day, Storm recovery events, HRSSN, community referral</td>
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<tr>
<td>Upper Hunter Shire Council</td>
<td>HRSSN, Community Services Committee, General community connection across different areas, farm safety, potential financial understanding workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farming groups/committees</td>
<td>Merriwa Interschool’s farm safety day, Singleton ‘He said, she said’, Community Support Skills (RAMHP), cost of production, women in dairying, dairy DIGS &amp; DADS, Upper Mooki Landcare events, HRSSN</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catholic Community Healthcare/ Dept of Human Services</td>
<td>Pilliga rural Women’s Retreat, Farm Office Efficiency Workshops, Working Dog workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>North West Plains Sustainability Group</td>
<td>Keeping in Touch, KIT Grazing Field Day, Being a Better Boss Parts 1 and 2, Technology, Tablets and Tips workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partners in Grain</td>
<td>Being a Better Boss Parts 1 and 2, Technology, Tablets and Tips workshop, Office Use Efficiency Workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Financial Counsellor Walgett</td>
<td>Referral point for invitation to various hay drops, understanding of welfare assistance programs, RAA assistance; general community intelligence</td>
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<tr>
<td>North West Plains Sustainability Group - Drought Sub-Committee</td>
<td>Drought meetings x 6; support to summarise Discussion Paper, coordinate initial meetings with Ag Consultant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP)</td>
<td>Suicide prevention Workshop; Storm Recovery Events; Mate helping mate presentations Men’s Health Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Financial Counselling Service</td>
<td>Options workshops; Storm Recovery Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLS</td>
<td>Low Stress Stock Handling; Innovations in Wool</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wentworth Shire Council</td>
<td>Storm Recovery Events; Impact on residents in Lower Darling that will run out of water as a result of river running dry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wine Grapes Marketing Board</td>
<td>Options Workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western LLS</td>
<td>Advanced Working Dog and Animal Movement Livestock Workshops, Aboriginal Landholders Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centacare Wilcannia Forbes</td>
<td>Her Place Writing &amp; photography workshops, Rejuvenation and Inspiration weekend, Phoenix Essentials and Mapping workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catholic Community Care / Department of Human Services</td>
<td>Advanced Working Dog and Animal Movement Livestock Workshops, Influential Women Workshops, Hungerford Field Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>House with No Steps</td>
<td>Advanced Working Dog and Animal Movement Livestock Workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Financial Counselling Service – Bourke</td>
<td>Phoenix Essentials and Mapping workshops</td>
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Pilliga Drought Rural Women’s Retreat Walgett Shire

**Aim:** Provide information, services and an opportunity for farming women to improve their personal resilience, health and wellbeing.

**Challenge/Problem:** Many women living in the North-West are experiencing the worst drought conditions since rainfall records began. Some districts have had less than half their average rainfall for three years and are now entering a fourth year. Due to the long term nature of this drought physical, mental, emotional and financial resources are all being tested. The Pilliga Rural Women’s Retreat aims to allow women to have an enjoyable and productive weekend away from home.

**Activities:**
- Mini Shaping Our Future’s Together (SOFT) course
- Haloumi cheese making
- Star gazing
- Relaxation strategies including yoga and foot massage
- Creativity workshops including sour dough bread making and clay pottery

**Outcomes:**
- 20 women participated from across 4 LGAs.
- Existing networks strengthened and new networks formed.
- Each participant left with a SMARTR goal and support with 3 a 1 monthly phone calls.
- Commitment by RRP and Catholic Healthcare to bring women together for a follow up day and night to revisit goal and assist in consolidating goal setting and reconnect with each other.
- Time out to refresh and rest.
- Safe environment for participants to discuss various topics they may not have felt safe doing otherwise.

Robyn Walters (RSW) Walgett

Financials and Mapping Workshops for Farmers North West

**Aim:** Farmers, farm workers and their families have increased access to opportunities to build knowledge, capabilities and skills in business resilience.

**Challenge/Problem:** Farming families were stressed about the cumulative impacts of drought, and the negative impacts this had on their business enterprises.

**Activities:**
Three separate face to face workshops were held for farmers to improve financial management and mapping skills using Phoenix Agdata software. Budgeting, account reconciliation, record keeping and reporting requirements for GST and ATO were covered in the ‘Essentials’ workshop. The ‘Mapping’ workshops included developing full property plans including, marking existing fencing, watering points, contours and land usage, roads and fire breaks, as well as designing better layouts for properties for natural resource management, stock movement and herd management. Phoenix Agdata provides ongoing technical software support to farmers through an IT helpdesk hotline.

**Outcomes:**
- 29 farmers completed the workshops.
- Gained skills in business management, property planning, computer skills as well as feeling a greater sense of ‘empowerment’ and ‘control’ during drought.
- Strengthened networks and formed social connections through participation and engagement at the workshops – reduced isolation.
- Acknowledged managing business and property planning as essential to successful enterprises.
- Increased understanding of the RRP and what it aims to deliver.

Sarah Goulden (RRO) Bourke
Future Agricultural Options Workshop Riverina

Aim: Farmers, farm workers and their families have a vision and a viable future supported by relevant plans with more suitable enterprise options.

Challenge/Problem: The workshop concept was initiated because of a significant decline in returns on smaller blocks in the horticultural area and in particular, the wine grape and citrus industries. Farmers on these smaller blocks have seen their income significantly eroded in the last ten years. As an example grape prices have plummeted from somewhere around $1500 per tonne to approximately $200 per tonne. This decline in farming incomes has had a significant influence on farming families in the area. The financial stress is impacting on these farmers.

Activities: The workshop presented viable options for the Griffith area and showcased industries that are presently looking strong for this area. Local people that are thinking outside the square to increase on farm returns were invited to speak at the workshop. The workshop was designed to highlight that there may be other opportunities for these farmers. The emphasis is to get people thinking rather than show them the specific industry that may be right for them.

Outcomes:
» 110 farmers completed the workshop.
» Built skills and knowledge to make better and more informed decisions about farm diversification.
» Provided pathways for farmers to seek and research different industry options in the Griffith area.
» Established links and partnerships with industry specific specialists that may help with option decisions.
» Increased confidence and courage in the farming sector.
» Increased feeling of empowerment as individual and in the farming community.
» Increased individual’s feelings of personal & community empowerment.
» Created productive connections with Wine Grapes Marketing Board and Griffith City Council.

Disaster Leadership Project Clarence Valley

Aim: To improve the leadership skills of farming community members involved in natural disaster Planning and Recovery.

Challenge/Problem: The North Coast is highly vulnerable to flood events and supports a variety of agricultural industries which contribute to the state's economy.

Activities: Work with the SES to run two, four day leadership programs.

Outcomes:
» 54 people participated in the program.
» Built understanding the interrelationship between organizations during natural disasters.
» Networking and connectedness between farmers improved.
» Raised people’s awareness to the importance of adaptive leadership theory and qualities, interaction and the power of networking.
» Increased understanding of volunteering and capacity to meet organisational goals.
» Participants were empowered and equipped to take action eg: implement changes, expand their contacts, improve interagency relationships, learn more about adaptive leadership, ensure they have their own personal preparedness strategy, keeping things moving, inform others about the projects people are involved in, maintaining contact with other participants and engaging others in projects.
» Identified a need to assist older people with access to technology and using ‘apps’.

Jen Haberecht (RRO) Coffs Harbour

Danny Byrne (RRO) Hay
Rural Resilience Program Case Study Examples

Mini School and Writing Workshops for Outback Parents and Students Far West

**Aim:** Support a creative writing workshop to improve skills in written communication, journaling and storytelling.

**Challenge/Problem:** Many rural communities struggle with social isolation and poor communication skills which impacts on their ability to connect and learn from each other.

**Activity:** Research shows that when people allow themselves time to take ‘time out’ and write, they are happier, more content, less stressed, more confident and better able to look after the needs of others. They are more positive in their general outlook and more likely to encourage others to value their creativity, connect with their community and take time for themselves.

Supporting a writing workshop provided a mentoring opportunity that linked authors and students. Demonstrate to participants the value of written communication and journaling as a platform for isolated rural communities to connect, learn from each other, have a voice and share ideas.

**Outcomes:**
- Three workshops held with 40 participants.
- Strengthened personal and community resilience by reducing isolation and increasing connectedness among people living in isolated locations.
- Increased awareness of the role creative activities (writing and storytelling) can play in promoting positive mental wellbeing.
- Increased understanding of how writing can be used as a tool for clarifying thoughts and developing solutions to challenges.
- Increased awareness and understanding of support services including health providers and the School of the Air.

Ellen Day (RSW) Broken Hill

Mobile Skin and Mental Health Checks Orana

**Aim:** Provide a ‘soft entry point’ for discussion and referral of other mental and physical health issues.

**Challenge/Problem:** Farmers often have limited time to look after their health and see their GP. Providing a quick and simple health check is more accessible for many farmers and provides a platform to discuss other health issues.

**Activity:** A qualified and experienced Registered Nurse and Social Worker provided access to skin cancer assessments, education and referrals as appropriate. The assessments offered accessible intervention, prevention and referrals to address the rising risk of mortality of skin cancers to farmers and a soft entry point for targeted mental health assessment, education and resources on site.

Mobile clinics were carried out at Cobar, Pilliga and Gwabegar.

**Outcomes:**
- 101 farmers and farm community members screened at three clinics.
- Resulted in 10 skin cancer GP referrals and 11 mental Health referrals.
- Increased awareness and knowledge of risk factors for skin cancers.
- Increased awareness and knowledge of risk factors for mental health issues.
- Increased awareness of local referral points for mental health services.
- Provided an opportunity for farmers to talk about any mental health issues of concern for themselves or their family in a non-threatening environment.

James Leigo (RSW) Dubbo

Ellen Day (RSW) Broken Hill
Rural Resilience Program Case Study Examples

Supporting Aquaculture Industries Recover from a Severe Natural Disaster Storm Event **Hunter**

**Aim:** Supporting agricultural industries that suffered storm damage recover to recover.

**Challenge/Problem:** A major aquaculture industry that employs workers from seven families was ineligible for income support due to them being located within an area that was not a declared Natural Disaster area.

**Activity:**
A referral was provided to the RRP regarding a major aquaculture industry facing closure due to extensive storm damage. The business also supported seven families, but was ineligible for any government financial support as they were not located within a declared Natural Disaster area. A business case was prepared with the Rural Financial Counsellor and a review undertaken of other support services who may be able to assist.

**Outcomes:**
- Financial support secured from the Salvation Army to assist the business to recover and maintain employment for seven families.
- Improved business skills.
- Improved understanding of support services available.
- Eight families supported and linked to services that could assist through their recovery from a natural disaster.

**Caroline Hayes (RSW) Scone**

Connecting Women in the Landscape Forum **Southern Tablelands**

**Aim:** Build capacity of local farming women to share their stories and learn from each other.

**Challenge/Problem:** DPI was contacted to provide a suitable speaker at a local women’s forum to raise awareness of stresses facing young farming women and some tips for helping others.

**Activity:**
The RRP mentored a Crookwell farmer, Pam Kensit, to present at this forum and share her story. Assistance was provided in developing her presentation and promoting the event to a wider audience via local and regional media.

**Outcomes:**
- 50+ younger women connected, inspired and empowered through personal story presentation delivered by local farmer – Pam Kensit.
- Follow up stories published in The Country Web newsletter and The Land Glovebox Guide to Mental Health resulted in information has been shared with thousands of farming families.
- Women in farming communities are better connected.
- Rural women’s have greater understanding and awareness of health and support service available.

**Ted O’Kane (RRO) Goulburn**
Rural Resilience Program Team

Rural Resilience Officers
Liane Corocher (Co-ordinator) [Tocal] 0427 188 643
Sarah Goulden [Bourke] 0418 113 781
Jen Haberecht [Coffs Harbour] 0400 160 287
Danny Byrnes [Hay] 0400 374 258
Ted O’Kane [Goulburn] 0427 781 514

Rural Support Workers
Robyn Walters [Walgett] 0438 082 731
Ellen Day [Broken Hill] 0427 639 761
James Leigo [Dubbo] 0419 110 714
Caroline Hayes [Scone] 0407 971 675