Survey purpose
In February-July 2015, the Rural Resilience Program conducted a state-wide survey to better understand how farming communities prepare for and cope with drought personally and at the farm business level, and to determine how resilience to future drought may be improved. The goal was to inform future planning of Rural Resilience Program activities. A total of 614 responses were received from across NSW.

Q1 What helps you personally to get through in times of drought?

- **Community and family resilience**: 59%
- **Personal resilience**: 46%
- **Financial and business resilience**: 29%

I have good mates and a good relationship with my wife and children, so never feeling alone is important.

(Male, 50s, Northern region)

Effective community and family resilience is reflected in people who actively support each other with strong family relationships, friendships, and networks.

Strong personal resilience is reflected in individuals who adapt to adverse situations by actively managing their health and reaching out for support when needed.

Healthy financial and business resilience is reflected in businesses who adapt to adverse situations by actively planning, managing financial and physical resources and accessing external assistance and expertise.

Q2 What measures do you take in your business to help you manage drought?

- **Livestock management – health, herd size, agistment and de-stocking**: 46%
- **Build or conserve stock feed reserves**: 33%
- **Build or conserve cash reserves, borrow, or reduce expenditure**: 28%
- **Build or conserve water resources and infrastructure**: 22%
- **Diversification and off-farm income**: 12%
- **Farm and market monitoring**: 6%

Not over-stocking country. Rotating paddocks to let feed get away. Installing tanks and troughs to minimise water evaporation.

(Female, 30s, Northern region)

Have a good plan as to what livestock you will sell and at what time and stick to it.

(Male, 30s, Central West and Tablelands region)

Q3 Besides cash, what is one thing that could help you get through a drought in the future?

- **Improved business and farm resilience**: 45%
- **Improved government support**: 42%
- **Improved community and family resilience**: 18%
- **Improved personal resilience**: 7%

Better business/accounting organisational and planning skills; easier access to mental health support; more community social events at low to no cost to ease the mental pressures of drought as a collective; programs to keep skilled workers in employment in the district...

(Female, 40s, Northern region)

The knowledge that State and Federal governments understand and support our efforts to stay on the land and acknowledge our contribution to the national economy in the long term...

(Female, 60s, Central West and Tablelands region)
Rural Resilience Program

The Department of Primary Industries Rural Resilience Program seeks to improve or ‘build’ the personal and business resilience of NSW farming communities and promote innovation.

Resilience is viewed as a process whereby people adapt and move forward in a positive direction despite experiencing significant adversity. It is neither an outcome, nor a personality trait, and can be impacted by social, economic, cultural and environmental factors such as drought.

Profile of respondents

- Gender of respondents:
  - Male: 64%
  - Female: 36%

- Age of respondents:
  - 20s or less: 3%
  - 30s: 10%
  - 40s: 19%
  - 50s: 25%
  - 60s: 21%
  - 70s: 13%
  - 80s or more: 2%

- Regional location of respondents:
  - Northern: 23%
  - North Western: 14%
  - Central West and Tablelands: 13%
  - Far West: 11%
  - Murrumbidgee: 10%
  - South Coast and Southern Tablelands: 9%
  - Hunter: 5%
  - Mid North Coast and Richmond Tweed: 4%
  - Murray: 3%
  - Sydney and Illawarra: 1%

Areas for further exploration

**Personal support**

- How can the RRP work with farming families and communities on activities not directly related to agriculture?
- How can the RRP strengthen existing farmer support networks and facilitate the development of new ones?
- How can the RRP improve farming family and community awareness about the importance of being proactive about health and wellbeing?

**Farm and business management**

- How can the RRP improve farmer understanding of the importance of developing and activating a formal drought plan?
- How can the RRP improve farmer awareness and engagement in drought preparedness professional development and training opportunities relevant to their enterprise and location?

**Government support**

Although beyond the scope of the RRP:

- Is there potential for government to review red tape and address access to online forms and other types of internet based information and assistance?
- How can government simplify the application processes for drought assistance and review the impact of regulations on farming enterprises?

More information

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