

HOUSEHOLD FINANCIAL RELIEF – CWA OF VICTORIA DROUGHT RELIEF PROGRAM GUIDELINES

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Victorian Government has established the \$3 million Household Financial Relief program (the Program) to provide immediate assistance to farming families affected by drought and dry conditions.

The Program is a key component of the increased drought assistance being provided to Victorian farmers.

The Country Women's Association (CWA) of Victoria will deliver the Program as part of their Drought Relief program.

The CWA of Victoria will provide payments of up to \$3,000 (GST inclusive) to each successful eligible farming family to assist with meeting urgent household expenses such as residential rates, food, school expenses, rent, household and medical bills.

The Program is available to eligible recipients in the following regions:

East Gippsland and Wellington

Eligible farm businesses, where the farm is located in Wellington and East Gippsland shires.

Far North West Victoria – the Millewa

Eligible dryland farm businesses, where the farm is located in the far north west corner of Victoria, generally known as the Millewa and surrounding areas.

This incorporates the following towns and locality areas: Carwarp, Colignan, Cullulleraine, Hattah, Iraak, Koorlong, Lindsay Point, Meringur, Merrinee, Nangiloc, Neds Corner, Wargan, and Werrimull.

Goulburn Murray Irrigation District

Eligible irrigation farm businesses where the farm is located in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District (GMID), including those that have transitioned from irrigation production systems since 1 July 2018.

The GMID encompasses six local government areas of Campaspe Shire, Gannawarra Shire, Greater Shepparton City, Loddon Shire, Moira Shire and Swan Hill Rural City.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

The Program will assist farming families affected by drought and dry conditions to meet urgent household expenses.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Eligible household expenses must be incurred between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020.

Eligible household expenses include (but are not limited to):

- Residential rates
- Groceries and food
- School expenses
- Household bills (electricity, gas, water)
- Rent
- Telephone expenses
- Urgent dental and medical treatment.

INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Activities and expenses not eligible for payment include (but are not limited to):

- General farm business expenses (e.g. equipment, irrigation, insurance, fodder)
- Capital works
- Farm rates notice – without your principal residence
- Expenses that do not incur an invoice or receipt
- Household expense purchases prior to 1 July 2019.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible to access funding under the Program:

- You are a property owner, share farmer or lease holder
- You are employed, or were recently employed (this includes employment part-time or casual basis), by a farming business, or
- You are a farming dependent contractor
- Your farming property/location of employment or contracting business is located (or servicing farms) in an eligible area:
 - If you are located in the area defined as the Millewa or surrounds: you are primarily a dry land producer or employed by a dryland farming business or servicing/contracting to dryland farming businesses (i.e. the majority of your income is, under normal seasonal conditions, based on dryland production).
 - If you are located in the GMID, encompassing the six local government areas of Campaspe Shire, Gannawarra Shire, Greater Shepparton City, Loddon Shire, Moira Shire and Swan Hill Rural City: you are an irrigation farmer or have transitioned from an irrigation production system after 1 July 2018, or employed by an irrigation farming business or servicing/contracting to an irrigation farming businesses.
- The majority of the family's labour is devoted to the farming business, or
- Under normal business conditions*, the majority of your household's income is derived from farming enterprises (either as a business owner, employee or farming dependent contractor).

Only one payment is available per eligible farming family.

*Normal business conditions refer to a year with no adverse climatic conditions (drought, flood, fire) in which average yields/productivity is achieved.

ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Activities or invoices that have received (or are approved to receive) funding from another source will be ineligible for payments under this program. Examples include, but are not limited to, the Commonwealth Drought Community Support Initiative.
- Applicants will be asked to provide evidence of their eligibility status.
 - For farm business owners, share farmers or leases, this may include: ABN number, rates notice, lease documentation, share-farming contract, a copy of a Goulburn Murray Water Fixed Services Account.
 - For farm employees, this may include: Employment contract, pay slip, signed letter from employer.
 - For farming dependent contractors, this may include: ABN number, business plans, service agreements, invoices.

APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Applicants should carefully consider activities against the eligibility criteria set out in the Program Guidelines before submitting an Application.

Applications will be assessed against the eligibility criteria.

Applications for the Program should be submitted to the CWA of Victoria – Drought Relief application process.

The CWA of Victoria and/or Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions reserves the right to request further information from you or from any business or individual you have engaged, to assist in assessing the application and to verify any information provided in your application.

The CWA of Victoria will process completed applications in order of receipt, noting that priority will be provided to households that have not already accessed Drought Relief funding from 1 October 2019.

By signing the application form, you are declaring that the information provided in the application and supporting documentation is true and accurate.

Providing inaccurate, untrue or misleading information may be a breach of criminal law for which serious penalties may apply.

Step 1 - Application process opens

Applicant to:

- Complete CWA Drought Relief application form and submit to the CWA of Victoria.
- Applications must be supported by evidence of eligibility, invoices or receipts for the full value of the requested payment.

Step 2 - Approval and payment process

- The CWA of Victoria will contact the Applicant if clarification of submitted information or further information is required.
- Successful applicants will have payments directed into the Applicant's designated bank account.
- Unsuccessful Applicants will be advised.

Step 3 - Payment

- Payment will be processed via electronic funds transfer to the applicant's nominated bank account.

The CWA of Victoria, in consultation with the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions may audit successful applicants throughout the life of the program.

FUNDING SOURCE

The Victorian Government is providing increased support to assist farming families affected by drought and dry conditions. On 2 October 2019, the Victorian Government announced a 2019-20 Drought Support Package. This funding included \$15 million for a Farmers' Drought Fund of which \$3 million was targeted for household financial relief.

DURATION OF THE PROGRAM

Payments will be available from the date the program opens until 30 June 2020 or until the program funds are fully expended; whichever comes first.

REVIEW AND AMENDMENT

The Program Guidelines are correct at the time of publishing.

The Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions may review and amend this funding program at any time.

EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM

The Victorian Government may conduct an evaluation to determine the extent to which the Program has contributed to Victorian Government policy objectives. Recipients may be requested to provide information to assist in auditing during the program or the evaluation after the program's completion.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Country Women's Association of Victoria

Telephone: (03) 9827 8971

Email: drought@cwaofvic.org.au

Web: cwaofvic.org.au

Postal address: Drought Relief, CWA of Victoria, 3 Lansell Road, Toorak VIC 3142

Agriculture Victoria

A range of support is available to farmers affected by drought and dry seasonal conditions. Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to participate in these programs.

For more information about other drought support being provided by the Victorian Government and Commonwealth Government, please contact Agriculture Victoria.

Telephone: 136 186

Email: drought.support@agriculture.vic.gov.au

Web: agriculture.vic.gov.au/dryseasons

Confidentiality

Any personal information provided by the Applicant or a third party in an application will be collected by the CWA of Victoria and Agriculture Victoria for the purpose of administration of the program. This information may be provided to other Victorian Government bodies for the purposes of assessing the Program.

Data gathered through assessments may be compiled, aggregated and made anonymous by the CWA of Victoria and Agriculture Victoria for program reporting, evaluation and research purposes.

Any personal information collected, held, managed, used, disclosed or transferred will be held in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic) and other applicable laws.

Agriculture Victoria is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information. Agriculture Victoria's Privacy Policy can be found online at djpr.vic.gov.au/privacy. Enquiries about access to information should be directed to the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions' Privacy Unit by phone on (03) 9651 9749 or email privacy@ecodev.vic.gov.au.