



Empowering our Communities – when commissioning meets community

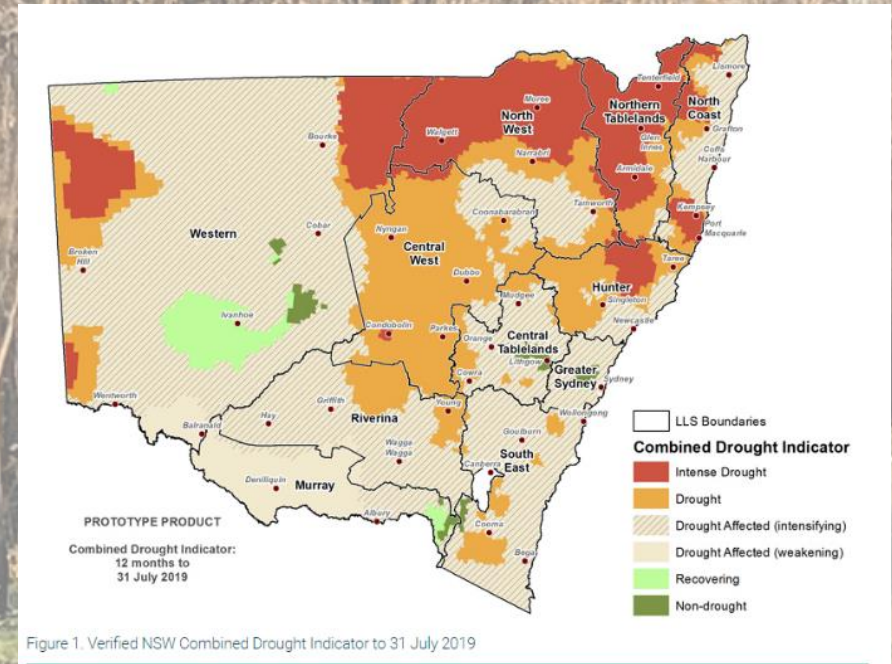
2022 PHN Commissioning Showcase

Background

In response to the ongoing drought, the Federal Government provided funds for community-led wellbeing initiatives to help farmers, families and communities to deal with the uncertainty, stress and anxiety of drought conditions

NBMPHN was funded again in response to the 2019/20 Black Summer bushfires to provide small grants that enabled people to choose their own way to respond to the loss, anxiety and distress they experienced

Using learnings from drought grants we developed a community grants program that addressed the bushfire recovery cycle, the capacity of the community and the PHN's internal resources.



The challenge ...

Pivoting from commissioning to community grants to meet the needs of distressed and traumatised disaster affected communities



Sherri McMahon, Drought and Bushfire affected Community Member

The approach

- Grass-roots community engagement, consultation and capacity building
- Redesigning commissioning and contracting processes to reflect the capacity of the community
- Translating learnings from EoC to Bushfire to ensure the grants were more accessible, better able to target community need, address organisational capability withstand external influences (ie Covid)

The impact

- 37 projects in drought-affect communities
- 80 bushfire projects
- Benefits beyond the life of the project
- Community and stakeholder connections provided the ‘groundwork’ for bushfire recovery
- Direct routes into affected communities
- Strengthened connections proved critical to their fire challenges
- Community grants provided a soft entry to address mental health issues and referrals to mental health professionals.

The learnings

- Adapting commissioning processes to the needs of the community is critical to the success of the program
- Increasing the capacity of the community is the building block for future engagement
- Community connection facilitated by the grants are an important aspect of low intensity support services
- Rural communities often prefer non-clinical mental health supports and rely on trusted relational sources
- Integrating existing formal supports through grant funded community led initiatives
- Increased understanding of the importance of community taking care of each other as part of a 'system'
- Increased appreciation of the strength and resilience of our community



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