

# Rural Community Support Program

Information Update - Issue No1: August, 2008

## VicRelief Foodbank extends its Drought Relief Program

### Background:

In September, 2007, the Victorian Government provided significant funding to VicRelief Foodbank (VRFB) to enable it to extend its assistance to drought affected communities in rural Victoria well into 2008.

Throughout the past 12 months VRFB has been able to provide immediate food and material aid support to 15 drought declared regions in northern and western Victoria. Additionally it has commenced an emergency relief network development program which aims to enhance the capability of local emergency relief agencies to effectively respond to increased demands on their resources, as a result of prolonged drought.

This work has allowed VRFB to consolidate this critical support at a time when there has been a 46% increase in the demand for emergency relief in drought affected rural areas. At the same time the reduction in rural income has had a dramatic flow-on effect across a broad cross-section of people living in these communities.

VicRelief Foodbank has with the support of the Victorian Government continued to provide critical drought food relief over the past 3 years. This continues our involvement in disaster relief as a key provider over the past 75 years assisting Victorians experiencing hardship as a result of disasters such as drought, bushfire and flood.

VRFB directly supports more than 600 welfare agencies and community organisations across the state to provide emergency relief to many thousands of disadvantaged Victorians. Last year VicRelief Foodbank provided over \$16m of food aid (retail value) to Victorians in need.

### VicRelief Foodbank Community Drought Relief Program

This program comprises two key areas:

**1: Emergency Relief Resources** – Funding to provide drought packs, vouchers, return to school funds and Christmas toys providing immediate relief and assistance to rural farming families.

**2: Emergency Relief Network Development** – Throughout 2007 and 2008 VRFB has been working closely with drought affected communities to develop new emergency relief networks and strengthen existing networks.

We believe developing community networks is critical to the delivery of an effective response to the economic and social hardship brought about by drought.

In addition to continuing the role of Trevor Barker, VRFB drought project coordinator, further funding has enabled us to appoint new rural community support officers in the Barwon-South West, Gippsland and Loddon Mallee regions. These new staff additions to our Rural Community Support Program allow us to enhance the capacity of emergency relief agencies to deal with the direct impact of drought on their local communities.

### **Rural Community Support Officers**

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### **For further information about the VRFB Rural Community Support Program**

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