Developing some strategies for what you can do to get through floods, drought and extreme climate events

Where to go for help

- Lifeline 13 11 14
- www.lifeline.org.au
- A self-help resource to help families dealing with floods, drought and extreme climate events

For more information visit www.lifeline.org.au
For 24 hour telephone crisis support call 13 11 14
To donate call 1800 800 768

Lifeline’s tool kit for getting through floods, drought and extreme climate events will provide some practical information about:

Understanding floods, drought and extreme climate events and their impact on (rural) communities

Understanding how floods, drought and extreme climate events can affect individual wellbeing

How do floods, drought and extreme climate events impact on rural communities?

Living and working in rural Australia can be both a very rewarding and challenging way of life. People living in rural areas are known for their down-to-earth, practical and community spirit.

Some of the ways floods, drought and extreme climate events can affect rural communities are:

- Financial hardship for farmers and other rural businesses, which may eventually lead to farms being sold and businesses to close
- Family and relationship problems (e.g. arguing, disagreements, lack of communication, physical conflict, relationship breakdowns)
- Job pressure and overworking
- People leaving the community due to a lack of opportunities or income (particularly young people)
- Environmental problems, such as loss of vegetation and animals, drying or flooding of rivers, soil erosion and increased risk of bushfires
- Lack of community services, including health care, education, housing and employment organisations
- Higher incidence of physical and mental health problems amongst community members, as well as an increased risk of suicide
- Loss of social networks and a breakdown in community spirit

How do floods, drought and extreme climate events affect rural communities?

Floods, drought and extreme climate events don’t only affect people who live on the land – it is stressful for everyone living in rural communities.

Its economic, environmental and social consequences are felt across rural communities, many of which are close-knit, and often dependent on each other for income and social support.

Some of the ways floods, drought and extreme climate events can affect rural communities:

- Financial hardship for farmers and other rural businesses, which may eventually lead to farms being sold and businesses to close
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Farmsafe Hotline
For more information visit www.farmsafe.org.au
For 24 hour assistance call 1800 050 585
To donate call 1800 800 768

Tool kit
Getting through floods, drought and extreme climate events

A self-help resource to help families dealing with floods, drought and extreme climate events

Drought Assistance Hotline on 13 23 16
Farm Assistance Hotline 1800 050 585
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – Information about government assistance programs for people in drought
Farmsafe – Information on health and safety for farmers and their families
www.farmsafe.org.au
National Association for Loss & Grief (NALAG) – Information on local grief counselling services, support groups, self-help groups, and telephone counselling services
www.nalag.org.au

Acknowledgements:

Prime Super is the proud sponsor of the Lifeline Information Service – your mental health and self-help resource.
Prime Super is Australia’s only nationally operating super fund dedicated to rural and regional Australia.

For more information on Prime Super, please ring 1800 875 839 or visit their website www.primesuper.com.au
Lifeline and Prime Super are working in partnership to promote mental health awareness, help-seeking and suicide prevention.

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How do floods, drought and extreme climate events affect individual wellbeing?

The stress caused by floods, drought and extreme climate events can affect our wellbeing in a number of ways. Everyone experiences stress from time to time, but the ongoing nature of floods, drought and extreme climate events can lead to “burnout” and physical and mental exhaustion. Long-term stress may also cause more serious physical and mental health problems, such as heart problems, ulcers, depression or anxiety disorders.

Some common signs of stress due to floods, drought and extreme climate events may include:

- Physical symptoms, such as headaches, difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, aches and pains, fatigue, nervousness, chest or back pain, diarrhoea or constipation, injuries or accidents.
- Always feeling tired, lacking energy or motivation.
- No longer enjoying hobbies and interests.
- Increased use of alcohol, cigarettes or other drugs to cope or escape the situation.
- Feeling hopeless, worthless or like “life is not worth living.”
- Thoughts of suicide or harming yourself.

Most people experience some of these emotions at some point in their lives. However, if you are experiencing several of these at the same time or if they interfere with your ability to carry out daily activities, you should talk to someone you trust (e.g. partner, friend, relative) and seek help from your GP or another health professional.

How does stress affect wellbeing?

Everyone deals with stressful circumstances differently, so it is important to find ways of managing stress that work for you. The important thing to remember is that you can get through it and you don’t have to go through it alone.

1. Recognise when it's getting too much

Sometimes we’re so busy trying to get things done that we might not realise that we need a break. Learning to listen to your body and recognising the signs of stress is the first step in doing something about it. Take notice of any changes in your physical health, your behaviour or your emotions that might indicate that things are getting too much for you. Listen to your conscience and listen to your body. You may find yourself discovering that times are good for you but you don’t have the time to go through it alone.

2. Talk about it

The stress of floods, drought and extreme climate events can cause you to experience a range of emotions. Talking calmly and openly to someone you trust about how you’re feeling allows you to release negative feelings and put things in perspective. If you don’t feel comfortable talking to someone you know, telephone helplines like Lifeline and online options (e.g. email, online chat forums) are also available for confidential support and advice.

Remember, during floods, drought and extreme climate events, everyone in the community is likely to be experiencing similar emotions, so talking to family members, friends and neighbours can help everyone to release negative feelings and come up with practical ways of managing their stress and dealing with the situation.

3. Explore financial options

One of the most obvious consequences of floods, drought and extreme climate events is often financial problems. Financial worries can also lead to other problems, such as family and relationship difficulties. Sometimes the stress of your financial situation can seem overwhelming.

A good place to start in dealing with financial pressure is to put together an accurate summary of your financial situation. List all the income that you have coming in, and all the expenses and debts that you have. Then talk to your bank or financial advisor about options available to you to better manage your finances. There are lots of financial assistance programs available to rural families and businesses during floods, drought and extreme climate events, which may provide some relief. It can also be helpful to get together with family members (including children) to create a family budget you all agree on.

4. Visit your GP or health professional

Stress can often lead to poor physical health, such as tiredness, headaches, nervousness, sleeping difficulties, aches/pains and accidents. It can also cause mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety. So, even if you don’t feel “sick”, a check-up with your local doctor is still a good idea, especially if you have worry them. However, usually children and adolescents pick-up on when you are stressed and know when things aren’t right and can express themselves in other ways, such as through upset or arguing. Not knowing what’s going on can make them worry and they may blame themselves for what’s happening.

It’s important to include children and adolescents in discussions about the situation and involve them in decision-making as much as possible. Help them to understand their responsibilities (e.g. concentrating at school, doing homework, helping out at home) and reassure them that, although things are tough, you will get through it together. Talk to them about their feelings and notice any changes in their behaviour that may indicate that they are feeling stressed. Involving children and adolescents in good decision-making processes can also teach them valuable lessons about how to deal with stressful situations.

5. Helping children and adolescents

Sometimes we don’t discuss stressful situations with our children and adolescents because we don’t want to worry them. However, if your children and adolescents pick-up on when you are stressed and know when things aren’t right, this can cause a lot of hardship for them. So, even if you don’t discuss stressful situations, be aware that your children and adolescents may be picking up on what’s going on and can make them worry and they may blame themselves for what’s happening.

It’s important to include children and adolescents in discussions about the situation and involve them in decision-making as much as possible. Help them to understand their responsibilities (e.g. concentrating at school, doing homework, helping out at home) and reassure them that, although things are tough, you will get through it together. Talk to them about their feelings and notice any changes in their behaviour that may indicate that they are feeling stressed. Involving children and adolescents in good decision-making processes can also teach them valuable lessons about how to deal with stressful situations.

6. Take care of yourself

When we’re stressed, we often become run-down or burnt out, so it’s important to take care of yourself! Eat healthy, get at least eight hours of sleep each night and exercise regularly (preferably away from work). Remember to take time out to relax – read a book, listen to music, watch a movie or something like yoga or meditation. It’s also important to do fun activities that you enjoy both on your own and with family and friends.

Spending time with friends and family helps to prevent isolation and loneliness. Alcohol and drugs weaken your ability to make decisions, alter your mood and productivity. They can also lead to mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety, so it’s a good idea to limit your intake.

7. Be positive and proactive

Learn about the specific diagnosis and the options for treatment and care that is available. Mental illness is a normal, everyday part of our experience and two can help us to understand our situation, including mood and anxiety disorders, personality disorders and depressive disorders such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. Each condition has specific effects and treatments.

8. Seek and accept help from others

It can be difficult to accept help from others, whether it’s practical or emotional support. However, there are lots of ways that people with strong connections with family, friends and their community cope best in times of stress. A strong support network means you can talk to people to talk when things get tough. It takes strength and courage to ask for and receive help from others, but people are usually more than happy to help. Make a list of whom to go to for different types of help and advice (e.g. financial assistance, emotional support and help in a mental illness). Some ideas are listed at the end of this toolkit.

9. Act immediately if you have thoughts of harming yourself or suicide

Ongoing stress due to floods, drought and extreme climate events can lead to feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness and may lead to thoughts of suicide or attempting suicide. These are not a single act or one-time decision. They can be taken very seriously. If you or someone you know is experiencing thoughts of suicide or self-harm, seek immediate help by talking to someone you trust, calling a helpline (e.g. Lifeline 13 11 44) or visiting your GP. In an emergency, call 000.
How do floods, drought and extreme climate events affect individual wellbeing?

The stress caused by floods, drought and extreme climate events can affect our wellbeing in a number of ways. Everyone experiences stress from time to time, but the ongoing nature of floods, drought and extreme climate events can lead to “burnout” and physical and mental exhaustion. Long-term stress may also cause more serious physical and mental health problems, such as heart problems, ulcers, depression or anxiety disorders.

Some common signs of stress due to floods, drought and extreme climate events may include:

- Physical symptoms, such as headaches, difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, aches and pains.
- Changes in appetite, weight loss or weight gain.
- Changes in sleep patterns, such as being restless, having difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, or waking up and being unable to return to sleep easily.
- Changes in sexual activity.
- No longer enjoying hobbies and interests.
- Increased use of alcohol, cigarettes or other drugs to cope or escape the situation.
- Feeling hopeless, worthless or like “I’m not worth it.”
- Thoughts of suicide or harming yourself.

Most people experience some of these emotions at some point in their lives. However, if you are experiencing several at the same time or if they interfere with your ability to carry out daily activities, you should talk to someone you trust (e.g. partner, friend, relative) and seek help from your GP or another health professional.

Explore financial options

One of the most stressful consequences of floods, drought and extreme climate events is often financial stress. Floods, drought and extreme climate events can cause you to lose your home, job or income. Financial worries can also lead to other problems, such as family and relationship difficulties.

If you are experiencing financial stress, there are a number of ways to help manage your financial situation. The stress of floods, drought and extreme climate events can often cause people to feel helpless or out of control. However, there are things that you can do to help.

- Seek help immediately if you have thoughts of suicide or harming yourself.

Learn about the specific diagnosis and the options of treatment and care that is available. Mental illness is a brain disorder that may lead to disturbances in thoughts, behavior, emotions, and physical processes that can be very serious if not properly managed. There are two main categories of mental illness: mental disorders and substance use disorders. Each condition has specific effects and treatments.

Helping children and adolescents

Some people don’t discuss stressful situations with their children and adolescents because they don’t want to worry them. However, talking about the situation and letting your children and adolescents know what’s happening is the first step in doing something about it. Take notice of any changes in your children’s behavior or expression that may indicate that they are feeling stressed.

- Increased alcohol and tobacco use.
- Change in appetite.
- More or less sleep than usual.
- Disrupting their routine.
- Withdrawing or isolating themselves.
- Withdrawing or getting along with friends and family.
- Disrupting their routine.
- Change in school work.
- Crying over small things.
- Irritable or angry.
- Having difficulty concentrating or forgetfulness.
- Feeling angry, aggressive or irritable.
- Feeling helpless or out of control.
- Feeling hopeless, worthless or like “I’m not worth it.”
- Thoughts of suicide or harming yourself.

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Most people experience some of these emotions at some point in their lives. However, if you are experiencing several at the same time or if they interfere with your ability to carry out daily activities, you should talk to someone you trust (e.g. partner, friend, relative) and seek help from your GP or another health professional.

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If you are experiencing financial stress, there are a number of ways to help manage your financial situation. The stress of floods, drought and extreme climate events can often cause people to feel helpless or out of control. However, there are things that you can do to help.

- Seek help immediately if you have thoughts of suicide or harming yourself.
How do floods, drought and extreme climate events affect individual wellbeing?

The stress caused by floods, drought and extreme climate events can affect our wellbeing in a number of ways. Everyone experiences stress from time to time, but the ongoing nature of floods, drought and extreme climate events can lead to “burnout” and physical mental and emotional exhaustion. Long-term stress may also cause more serious physical and mental health problems, such as heart problems, tumors, depression or anxiety disorders.

Some common signs of stress due to floods, drought and extreme climate events may include:

- Physical symptoms, such as headaches, difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, aches and pains, chest or back pain, diarrhoea or constipation, injuries or accidents.
- Feeling tired, lacking energy or motivation
- Feeling angry, aggressive or irritable
- Always feeling stressed, without being able to relax
- Feeling hopeless, worthless or like “life is not worth living”
- Feeling helpless or out of control
- Disappointment, guilt, shame or feeling like a failure
- Having difficulty concentrating or forgetfulness
- Often feeling down or depressed
- Increased worrying, nervousness, anxiety or fear
- Feeling angry, aggressive or irritable
- Feeling helpless or out of control
- Feeling hopeless, worthless or like “life is not worth living”
- Thoughts of suicide or harming yourself.

Most people experience some of these emotions at some point in their lives. However, if you are experiencing several of these at the same time or if they interfere with your ability to carry out daily activities, you should talk to someone you trust (eg, partner, friend, relative) and seek help from your GP or another health professional.

Everyone deals with stressful circumstances differently, so it is important to find ways of managing stress that work for you. The important thing to remember is that you can get through it and you don’t have to go through it alone.

1. Recognise when it’s getting too much

Sometimes we’re so busy trying to get things done that we might not realise that we need a break. Learning to listen to your body and recognising the signs of stress is the first step in doing something about it. Take notice of any changes in your physical health, your behaviours or your emotions that might indicate that things are getting too much for you. Listen to your conscience and talk to someone you trust about your wellbeing or behaviour before it helps you or harms you.

2. Talk about it

The stress of floods, drought and extreme climate events can cause you to experience a range of emotions. Talking calmly and openly to someone you trust about your feelings, helping to relieve tension and put things in perspective. If you don’t feel comfortable talking to someone you know, telephone help-lines like Lifeline and online options (eg, email, online chat, forums) are also available.

Remember: during floods, drought and extreme climate events, everyone in the community is likely to be experiencing similar emotions, so talking to family members, friends and neighbours can help everyone to understand negative feelings and come up with practical ways of managing their stress and dealing with the situation.

3. Explore financial options

One of the most immediate consequences of floods, drought and extreme climate events is often financial stress. You may lose your job or income. Financial worries can also lead to other problems, such as family and relational difficulties.

Sometimes the stress of your financial situation can seem overwhelming.

A good place to start is to make a financial plan. First, write down all the income that you have coming in, and all of the expenses and debts that you have. Talk to your bank or financial advisor about options available to you to better manage your finances. There are lots of financial assistance programs available to rural families and communities during floods, drought and extreme climate events, which may provide some relief. It can also be helpful to get together with family members (including children) to create a family budget and talk about it.

4. Visit your GP or health professional

Stress can often lead to poor physical health, such as headaches, fainting, sleep difficulties, depressive symptoms, anxiety and accidents. It can also cause mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety. So, even if you don’t feel “sick”, a check-up with your GP is still a good idea when times are tough.

Talk to your GP about your situation and tell them how you feel if you’ve experienced any negative changes in how you feel. Your doctor can provide useful advice on how to manage stress and also give you access to other services that might be able to offer you support.

5. Helping children and adolescents

We sometimes don’t discuss stressful situations with our children and adolescents because we don’t want to worry them. However, sometimes they pick up on when you are stressed and when things aren’t right just by the way you are. They may become moody, irritable or argumentative. Not knowing what’s going on can make them worry and they may blame themselves for what’s happening.

It’s important to include children and adolescents in discussions about the situation and involve them in decision-making as much as possible. Help them to understand their responsibilities (eg, contributing at school, doing homework, helping out at home) and reassure them that, although things seem tough, you will get through it together. Talk to them about their feelings and notice any changes that may indicate that they are feeling stressed. Involving children and adolescents in good decision-making can also teach them valuable lessons about how to deal with stressful situations.

6. Take care of yourself

When we’re stressed, we often become run-down or burnt out, so it’s important to take care of yourself!

Eat healthily, get at least eight hours of sleep each night and exercise regularly (preferably away from work).

Remember: during floods, drought and extreme climate events, everyone in the community is likely to be experiencing similar emotions, so talking to family members, friends and neighbours can help everyone to understand negative feelings and come up with practical ways of managing their stress and dealing with the situation.

7. Be positive and proactive

Learn about the specific diagnosis and the options for treatment that are available. Mental illness is a illness that can improve and be treated with the right help. It’s important to remember that the role of medication is to help manage your symptoms, not to cure your illness.

8. Seek and accept help from others

It can be difficult to accept help from others, whether it’s financial or practical or emotional support. However, having strong connections with family, friends and your community can help you to feel less isolated and gives you people to talk to when things get tough.

It takes strength and courage to ask for and receive help from others, but people are usually more than happy to help. Make a list of who to go to for different types of help and advice (eg, financial assistance, emotional support) and keep it in a readily available place. Some ideas are listed at the end of this text.

9. Act immediately if you have thoughts of harming yourself or suicide

Ongoing stress due to floods, drought and extreme climate events can lead to feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness and may lead to thoughts of suicide or self-harm. These thoughts are not unusual or uncommon; instead they are taken very seriously. If you or someone you know has thoughts of suicide or self-harm, seek immediate help by talking to someone you trust, calling a helpline (eg, Lifeline 13 13 14) or your GP.

An emergency, call 000.
Places to go for help now:

- Lifeline 13 11 14
  www.lifeline.org.au
- Kids helpline 1800 55 1800
  www.kidshelp.com.au
- Men's Line Australia 1300 786 175
  www.mensline.org.au
- Rural Financial Counselling Service 1800 666 175
- Murray Darling Basin Assistance and Referral Line 1800 039 015
- Relationships Australia 1300 364 277
  www.relationships.org.au
- BeyondBlue information line 1300 224 636
  www.beyondblue.org.au
- SANE Australia helpline 1800 668 382
  www.sane.org
- National Association for Loss & Grief (NALAG)
  www.nalag.org.au
- Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467
  www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au
- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800
  www.kidshelp.com.au
- Lifeline 13 11 14
  www.lifeline.org.au

Utilise online resources. Some good ones are:

- Castlemaker – Community have a range of assistance programs for people experiencing floods, drought and extreme climate events. They can also provide referrals to online-based programs www.centrelink.gov.au
- Drought Assistance Hotline on 13 23 16
- Farm Assistance Hotline 1800 050 585
- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – Information about government assistance programs for people in drought. www.daff.gov.au/agriculture/drought
- Farmsafe – Information on health and safety for farmers and their families www.farmsafe.org.au
- National Association for Loss & Grief (NALAG) – Information on local grief counselling services, support groups, self help groups, and telephone counselling services www.nalag.org.au

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The assistance of Zan Hams in producing this tool kit is gratefully acknowledged.

Tool kit
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A self-help resource to help families dealing with floods, drought and extreme climate events

Understanding floods, drought and extreme climate events and their impact on (rural) communities

Understanding how floods, drought and extreme climate events can affect individual wellbeing

Developing some strategies for what you can do to get through floods, drought and extreme climate events

Where to go for help

How do floods, drought and extreme climate events impact on rural communities?

Living and working in rural Australia can be both a very rewarding and challenging way of life. People living in rural areas are known for being down-to-earth, practical and resilient. But, floods, drought and extreme climate events can test even the most resilient.

Floods, drought and extreme climate events don’t only affect people who live on the land – it is stressful for everyone living in rural communities.

Some of the ways floods, drought and extreme climate events can affect rural communities are:

- Financial hardship for farmers and other rural businesses, which can eventually lead to terms being sold out and businesses to close
- Family and relationship problems (e.g. arguing, disagreements, lack of communication, physical conflict, relationship breakdown)
- Job pressure and overworking
- People leaving the community due to lack of opportunities or income (particularly young people)
- Environmental problems, such as loss of vegetation and animals, drying or flooding of rivers, soil erosion and increased risk of bushfires
- Lack of community services, including health care, education, housing and employment organisations
- Higher incidence of physical and mental health problems amongst community members, as well as an increased risk of suicide
- Loss of social networks and a breakdown in community spirit.

The assistance of Zan Hams in producing this tool kit is gratefully acknowledged.

Lifeline’s tool kit for getting through floods, drought and extreme climate events will provide some practical information about:

- Understanding floods, drought and extreme climate events and their impact on (rural) communities
- Understanding how floods, drought and extreme climate events can affect individual wellbeing
- Developing some strategies for what you can do to get through floods, drought and extreme climate events

Where to go for help
Places to go for help now:

- Lifeline 13 11 14
  www.lifeline.org.au
- Kids HopeLine 1800 55 1800
  www.kidshelp.com.au
- Men's Line Australia 1300 788 398
  www.mensline.org.au
- Rural Financial Counselling Service 1800 666 175
- Murray-Darling Basin Assistance and Referral Line 1800 030 015
- Relationships Australia 1300 884 277
  www.relationships.org.au
- BeyondBlue Information Line 1300 224 636
  www.beyondblue.org.au
- SANE Australia Helpline 1800 688 382
  www.sane.org
- National Association for Loss & Grief (NALAG)
  www.nalag.org.au
- Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467
  www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au
- Relationships Australia 1300 364 277
  www.relationships.com.au
- Men’s Line Australia 1300 789 978
  www.menslineaus.org.au
- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800
  www.kidshelp.com.au

This Tool Kit has been produced by the Lifeline Information Service as a public service.

For more information visit www.lifeline.org.au

To donate call 1800 800 768

LifeLine's tool kit for getting through floods, drought and extreme climate events

Getting through floods, drought and extreme climate events

A self-help resource to help families dealing with floods, drought and extreme climate events

Understanding floods, drought and extreme climate events and their impact on (rural) communities

Understanding how floods, drought and extreme climate events can affect individual wellbeing

Developing some strategies for what you can do to get through floods, drought and extreme climate events

Where to go for help

How do floods, drought and extreme climate events impact on rural communities?

Living and working in rural Australia can be both a very rewarding and challenging way of life. People living in rural areas are known for being down-to-earth, practical and resilient. But, floods, drought and extreme climate events can test even the most resilient.

Floods, drought and extreme climate events don’t only affect people who live on the land – it is stressful for everyone living in rural communities.

Its economic, environmental and social consequences are felt across rural communities, many of which are close-knit, and often dependent on each other for income and social support.

Some of the ways floods, drought and extreme climate events can affect rural communities are:

- Financial harding for farmers and other rural businesses, which may eventually lead to terms being sold and businesses to close
- Family and relationship problems (e.g. arguing, disagreements, lack of communication, physical conflict, relationship breakdown)
- Job pressure and overworking
- People leaving the community due to a lack of opportunities or income (particularly young people)
- Environmental problems, such as loss of vegetation and animals, dying or flooding of rivers, soil erosion and increased risk of bushfires
- Lack of community services, including health care, education, housing and employment organisations
- Higher incidence of physical and mental health problems amongst community members, as well as an increased risk of suicide
- Loss of social networks and a breakdown in community spirit

For 24 hour telephone crisis support call 13 11 14
For more information visit www.lifeline.org.au
To donate call 1 800 800 768

Acknowledgements:

Drought Assistance Hotline on 13 23 16
Farm Assistance Hotline 1800 050 585
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Information about government assistance programs for people in drought
Farmsafe
- Information on health and safety for farmers and their families
www.farmsafe.org.au
National Association for Loss & Grief (NALAG)
- Information on local grief counselling services, support groups, self help groups, and telephone counselling services
www.nalag.org.au