

Drought and climate adaptation program

GrazingFutures Project Narrative

Partner Spotlight: Collaboration goes both ways for central region RFCS and DAF teams

A grazing business in Western Queensland can be quite the juggling act to manage a livestock production system, whilst maintaining or improving land condition in a region with high rainfall variability and coping with the vagaries of livestock markets.

There are several service providers in the public and private sectors working together to support the central west grazing industry. One such service provider, the Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS), has been funded by the Federal and Queensland governments for over 30 years and provides a pivotal service to the rural sector. Services that the RFCS provide include:

- Identifying financial and business options
- Risk management strategies
- Negotiating with lenders
- Identifying assistance programs including applying for Farm Household Allowance

The RFCS service is available to primary producers and rural related businesses. Strict confidentiality of client information is ensured when grazing businesses work with the RFCS team.

Set up as a collaborative approach with service providers and industry, the GrazingFutures program commenced in mid-2016 as a pilot across western Queensland to support grazing businesses build resilience. The initial success of the pilot project saw an additional five years of funding secured. GrazingFutures has five objectives which are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. GrazingFutures project objectives

Objectives	
1	Prioritise the delivery of workshops, training and support based on industry needs, data and regional drought recovery.
2	Support grazing businesses to improve business resilience, drought recovery and future drought preparedness.
3	Improve the skills and capacity of grazing industry support officers.
4	Partner with organisations to deliver comprehensive support to grazing businesses and value add existing services.
5	Analyse and document key learnings.

Since the commencement of the GrazingFutures project, the RFCS team have been a crucial and active partner for the project and their support contributes significantly to the GrazingFutures project objectives.

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A key interaction that members of the RFCS and GrazingFutures teams value highly is the confidential support network that has evolved over time. “Being able to refer clients to each other’s services is a key strength of this collaboration” explains GrazingFutures team member Jenny Milson.

When Rachel Bock, Rural Financial Counsellor in Longreach was asked what has changed in her role as a result of being involved in the GrazingFutures project she replied, “It’s great to know what is happening out in the region and with other organisations”. Rachel and Jenny both agree that the depth of technical knowledge and support available because of this collaboration contributes to producers being able to make more informed business decisions.

Cultivating and maintaining long-term professional relationships require a commitment of both time and energy. Team members from the RFCS and GrazingFutures agree that while it can be challenging to find time to maintain the relationship, the benefits of getting together are well worth the time investment (Figure 1). Both Rachel and Jenny agree one of the key benefits of these relationships is knowing where to access information and knowledge which can save a lot of time and energy “One person working in this region by themselves is a bit like a drop in the ocean” Rachel stated. Whereas “... a group of people coming together with a common goal can create a lasting wave of benefits” Rachel concluded.



Figure 1. GrazingFutures team members Jenny Milson and Jane Tincknell meeting with RFCS counsellor Rachel Bock.

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