Tackling Tough Times Together: Grants to relieve drought impacts

Program report, Rounds 1-9
September 2018

The Tackling Tough Times Together Program has made a significant impact on medium to long-term drought recovery for communities in Queensland and New South Wales.

FRRR has now delivered nine rounds of Tackling Tough Times Together (TTTT) for drought-affected regions. Through these nine rounds, 312 applications requested more than $5.1 million in funding. 125 grants have been distributed across drought-affected areas of Queensland (Qld) and New South Wales (NSW), valued at over $1,525,000, supporting 106 local organisations.

This valuable support across drought-affected regions would not have been possible without your generous support. The grant program has had a positive impact on both the experience and the mid to long-term drought recovery. Projects funded include community events, workshops and skills development, and community infrastructure.

It has been a fantastic opportunity to partner with the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation, the Yulgilbar Foundation, Aussie Farmers Foundation, Qantas Foundation and many key individual donors to continue the delivery of this vital program. We are very excited to roll out the model on a national basis as a result of the contributions of the Federal Government and other generous donations following our current drought campaign.

Regards,

Jacki Dimond
Programs Manager, NSW/QLD & ACT

FAST FACTS
Since 2014, the program has:
• Delivered nine funding rounds
• Received 312 applications, requesting a total of $5,112,516
• Distributed 125 grants totaling $1,525,041
• The average grant was $12,200
• An application success rate of 40%
• Supported 106 local organisations
• The most common requests include:
  - community events that also attract tourists to the region;
  - workshops and skills development;
  - maintaining mental health and recognising symptoms of distress; and
  - installation of vital infrastructure to increase or maintain community connection.
**Program Background**

In 2014, it was recognised that there were many areas significantly impacted by drought in Qld and NSW. The Tackling Tough Times Together (TTTT) grant program was designed to provide relief and support to affected communities, helping them access the resources that they needed to support one another through this difficult time.

The program has been generously supported by the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation, the Yulgilbar Foundation, Aussie Farmers Foundation, Qantas Foundation, FRRR and key individual donors. FRRR independently manages the grants program.

Leveraging FRRR’s previous experience of supporting natural disaster-affected communities, the objectives of the TTTT program were designed to specifically address issues that often surface in drought-impacted areas in rural and remote Australia. These objectives have altered over the life of the program to reflect the evolving needs of communities in different stages of drought or recovery.

Priority has been given to projects that
- Reduce social isolation by facilitating strong social cohesion and connection;
- Support and engage the community in leadership development and skills training;
- Build community capacity to cope now and in future droughts; or
- Enhance the mental health and wellbeing of drought-stressed rural and remote communities.

**Program Guidelines**

TTTT has a specific focus on funding grassroots, community-led projects across drought-declared regions of Qld and NSW. The grants are designed to support community-based activities that relieve community stressors and symptoms as well as build capacity and resilience for the future.

Initially, amounts of $10,000 for the small grants and $50,000 for the large grant round were offered. The small grant amount has changed over the course of the program, due to feedback from remote applicants that their expenses, such as travel and freight, were a substantial portion of the grant. The amount offered for the small grant round is currently $15,000.

Grants were made available for projects in drought-declared Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Qld, and western and northern NSW. As the program has progressed, the eligible LGAs have changed in response to drought status changes. It is important to note that LGAs that have been drought-revoked are still eligible for a TTTT grant 12 months after the status change.
Evaluation

FRRR commissioned a formal evaluation of the program in 2015, which was undertaken by RMCG. This involved an online survey – both qualitative and quantitative – and the review of grant applications and final reports.

The report ([which can be accessed here](#)) illustrated the program’s effectiveness in helping to reduce social isolation, although it noted that these events might be even more effective if they were augmented by professional support, from the likes of well-being practitioners or psychologists. The review confirmed that the other program objectives are also being met, although to a lesser degree. The analysis uncovered that 39% of projects were initiated because people were concerned about social isolation compared with 8% concerned with mental health and wellbeing, 14% with community capacity to cope. Of note, 71% of respondents said that their project would have ongoing benefits for more than 12 months after the project has been completed.

In summary, the formal evaluation found that the funding had helped people. It was noted that many of these projects were part of a broader program of works and it is not possible to tie measurable improvements to the TTTT funding alone, although the funding plays a vital role within the context of the community.

Whilst the formal evaluation was conducted three years ago, the findings continue to be reinforced through FRRR’s ongoing engagement with drought affected areas. Three tours have been undertaken to gain enhanced insight into the value of grants made by the program and to enhance the program’s effectiveness. The first tour, conducted in 2015 by FRRR directors and staff, highlighted the need to support volunteers during economic and social fatigue and empower locals’ leadership throughout delivery. The flexibility of the program was considered to be a key aspect to the program’s success.

The second tour, undertaken in 2017 by FRRR CEO and staff, echoed similar sentiments to the first, though the “new realities” of coping with ongoing drought were observed – communities were exploring ways of bringing activity to their regions, and thinking creatively about how ongoing drought can be integrated within their community’s operations. The guidelines to the program were subsequently amended to include an objective to “support local economic recovery or renewal”.

A recent tour to Central and West New South Wales, undertaken prior to the national media coverage of the drought issue, provided another important opportunity to witness firsthand the impact of the drought, and the toll which is being felt by communities and local community groups and organisations. The tour highlighted the challenge for groups which usually rely upon philanthropy from local business and farmers – which are currently receiving less support than usual, and are far more likely to need to access grants. There was a repeated reluctance to approach local individuals and enterprises in a shrinking economy. This tour has provided important insights which are informing the design of the expanded program.
Applications – themes and trends

Application numbers from Qld have been consistently higher than that of NSW, reflecting the greater number of eligible Local Government Areas (LGA’s) in Qld, until the recent declarations across NSW. Numbers in rounds 6 and 7 spiked for Qld, possibly due to the increase in small grant amount from $10,000 to $20,000 then down to $15,000 in round 7. See the distribution in Figure 1 below.

Although there were nine eligible LGA’s in NSW, only six were funded, with a significant proportion of those taking place in the Glen Innes Severn Shire, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 3 shows that the Maranoa Regional Council was the most commonly funded LGA in Qld, followed by projects in Barcaldine, Goondiwindi and various Council areas. Important to note is that Qld’s eligible LGA’s have changed over the course of the program, in response to the state’s drought declarations.

![Applications by State and Round](image)

![Projects supported by LGA in NSW](image)
Projects supported
Grants have covered various categories from the seven focus areas that FRRR provides funds for, which has been used to support analysis. Demand for projects ‘Promoting Individual & Community Health and Social Wellbeing’ far outstripped the other six categories, in both NSW and Qld. Interesting to note is that there was a strong emphasis on ‘Building Economic Strength & Sustainability,’ which was a new program objective from Round 10 of the program. Further breakdown can be seen below in Figures 4 and 5 below.

Figure 3: Projects supported by LGA in QLD
Funds provided to successful applicants were awarded across a broad range of organisation types. There has been a strong presence in Queensland for community groups who identify themselves in the ‘Culture, arts, tourism and community heritage’ category. New South Wales is well represented by Progress Associations and Sporting Clubs. The ‘Other’ categorisation appears strongly through the dataset, which includes broad community-based organisations which provide services in more than one of the classifications, and a few community radio stations – which could also be classified within Culture, Arts, Tourism & Community Heritage groups. See the distribution in Figure 6 below.
In addition to the funding available through the grant program, FRRR supported TTTT grant seekers in the following ways:

- Discussed their project proposals and helped them plan projects and budgets
- Strongly encouraged applicants to think about the in-kind support that could be leveraged to make the project a success
- Issued a tip sheet on how to write media releases, so that groups were supported to celebrate the success of receiving a grant and let the community know about the project they would soon be undertaking – also an opportunity to call for further community support for the project
- Gave tailored one on one verbal feedback to groups when requested, to assist them to understand the strengths and weakness of their application and to put together stronger applications in future
- Applicants were also encouraged to subscribe to FRRR eNews which includes tips, tricks and links containing valuable information to help rural, regional and remote communities and grant-seeking organisations achieve their goals and understand the intricacies of the philanthropic and not for profit landscape.

Financial Leverage
Since 2014, projects valuing a total of just over $4 million have been supported. The Tackling Tough Times Program’s contribution of over $1.52 million represents a significant proportion of the funds required to deliver these projects. The projects have leveraged cash contributions and in-kind support valued at approximately $2,520,900. For every dollar granted in NSW, $1.01 in other support was provided for the projects. In QLD, $1.83 of further support was contributed for every dollar awarded. This demonstrates the role of grants in stimulating extra economic activity and community directed support, and shows the significance of these projects to the communities where they were located. This is also reflected in feedback from recipients in Appendix One.
The Value of Partnership

Key indicators of a successful partnership include trust, clarity, shared goals and values, and regular, open communication. We would like to think that together, our commitment to these values along with you as our donor partners, is what has helped the successful implementation of the TTTT program year after year.

The injection of funds is critical, and the grants provide a boost to community organisations and the community itself. They show that others are concerned about their futures, and willing to help. We are pleased to have sustained and grown the program alongside our existing and future partners from Round 10.

In summary

TTTT has become a well-respected and well-known program over the last nine grant rounds, with awareness spreading amongst the eligible communities. Since 2014, the program has:

- Delivered nine funding rounds;
- Received 312 applications, requesting a total of $5,112,516
- Distributed 125 grants valued at $1,525,041
  - average grant value $12,200
  - application success rate - 40%
- Provided support to 106 organisations.

Thank you for your support and FRRR looks forward to continuing to partner with you to support communities through the drought.
Appendix One: Recipient Feedback

We were amazed to have nearly 700 people attend the five events. It was great to see people reacquaint with old friends and neighbours, forget their worries, and just get out and spend an afternoon or evening together enjoying some great humour and camaraderie. Very successful!!

**Border Rivers Catchment Management Assoc (Tie up the Black Dog Committee) - Rd 1 2014**

In the beginning, we thought some people did not book due to not wanting to leave the land. It turned out people (those brave enough to attend) just have not been off the land for so long they did not know if they will belong. Everyone had good things to say about the weekend with requests of doing something different every month.

**Desert Uplands Build-Up and Development Strategy Committee - Rd 1 2014**

The FRRR grant was instrumental in achieving our ambitious goals in a relatively short timeframe. Without it, we may well still be at the pre-order stage as far as the build of the trailer is concerned.

**The Lions Club of Tenterfield - Rd 1 2014**

While the children have benefitted directly from the lessons, the parents and grandparents and other family members have also experienced the flow-on effect. Long lost musical skills and talents have resurfaced, and many are remembering the simple joy of playing an instrument for no other reason other than enjoyment.

**Prairie Primary School P&C - Rd 1 2014**

I feel the impact of the event was huge and will continue in people’s memories for many years to come. I have been overloaded with requests to run another event just like the Drought Breaker Event. With thanks to FRRR and TTTT, we were able to change people lives in the bush and bring together a very high-class group to showcase their talents to people in need. I do hope I get the chance to one day work with FRRR and TTTT again to be able to make a difference in someone’s life.

**Croydon Campdraft & Rodeo - Rd 2 2014**

We recently received a grant of approximately $20,000 from the Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW through the Department of Human Services. Because of the generous grant we received from FRRR, our community is now able to receive grants and funding more easily from the successes of our project in the future. A huge thank you to FRRR and the Yulgibar Foundation.

**Wallangra Recreation Reserve Trust – Rd 2 2014**

Seeing the results of these events has inspired some of the smaller communities to make these events and annual occurrence. For example, the men at Talwood have decided to hold a Men’s Day every year now, with the theme of mental health and resilience.

**Waggamba Landcare Group – Rd 2 2014**

FRRR has been pivotal to the ongoing success of the Goondiwindi & District Community Gardens. We met with FRRR staff last year, which was wonderful. They encouraged all the Committee on work to date.

**Goondiwindi & District Community Garden - Rd 3 2014**
During prolonged drought, small regional communities can feel that they are battling the elements alone. It is fantastic that the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal was there to assist the Thallon community at a difficult time.

**Thallon Progress Assoc - Rd 5 2015**

Success was measured by the number of people who came, enjoyed and are still talking about it weeks later and wanting to know when we are having the next one, so a lasting impression for more laughter is the key.

**Muttaburra Community Development Assoc – Rd 6 2016**

A sense of social connectivity and wellbeing was experienced with community spirit raised and all who attended loved it, judging by the verbal feedback. Many attendees were visitors to Boulia who had heard of the concert and stayed longer, thus adding to Boulia’s economy.

**Boulia Shire Council - Rd 6 2016**

By far and away the biggest and best outcome was the establishment of the Men’s Shed. We have had 23 people turn up to the initial meeting (and have been offered) approximately $13,000 worth of tools. It has generated a lot of talk around town and has been beneficial in getting out an understanding of the need for men to be able to communicate.

**Mundubbera Enterprise Assoc - Rd 6 2016**

Everyone (at FRRR) was very understanding and had an excellent grasp of the situation in rural and remote areas, in particular, a compassionate attitude to people in remote, drought-affected areas. We are very fortunate indeed to have such a helpful and understanding group in your office.

**Roughlie Community Centre - Rd 6 2016**

This funding supported the engagement of entertainment for the show. By having free entertainment at the Show, the Committee can support the community during these challenging economic times brought on by the drought conditions. This project encouraged arts participation from the ‘non-arts’ community as the audience was engaged with the performances, providing a light-hearted avenue of relief from the current environmental and financial pressures.

**Tambo Stock Show Inc - Rd 7 2016**

We are a little group of people that feed a very large group of people, and we could have not possibly made this possible without the support of FRRR and TTTT.

**Gulf Cattleman’s Assoc - Rd 8 2017**

The impact that the project had on people’s personal lives and the happiness and joy that was created through this project were immeasurable, especially when the region is still struggling in severe drought conditions for five years.

**Red Ridge (Interior Qld) Rd 8 2017**
Appendix Two: Communities supported via Tackling Tough Times Together (2014 – 2018)
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Appendix Three: Case studies of projects supported

A closer community thanks to Carinda Comment

The remote town of Carinda in NSW has endured ongoing drought and as a result, suffered significant decline in the community. This included the closure of the General Store, and several families leaving town after bad seasons led to job losses in the region. Several of those who had to relocate to find work made up the team that published The Carinda Comment, a newsletter written by and distributed to the local residents of Carinda. It had been running for thirty years, but ceased in 2011, when the committee members left the community.

With a $5,000 grant through the program, supported by the Yulgilbar Foundation, a new team was formed to resuscitate the Carinda Comment, in conjunction with the Carinda Rugby Club – a club that no longer has enough players to yield a team, but still regularly hosts events within the community.

The Carinda Comment volunteers used the TTTT grant to purchase the equipment necessary to produce the local newspaper.

Now, 140 copies of The Carina Comment are published quarterly and includes news of local events, advertising for local businesses, and features support services available to the community.

With five issues published, morale within the Carinda community has improved and attitudes within the Carinda community are lifting. It’s proving to be a useful resource for the local residents to become informed on happenings around the region, as well as strengthening connections among Carinda locals.

Gulf Graziers BeefUp Showcase

Karumba is a community of a little over 500 people, situated in the Gulf Country of Queensland, more than 2,000 kilometres from Brisbane. It is better known as the outback by the sea. In October, 2017 it saw an influx of over 200 people over a two day period. They came for the Gulf Graziers Beef Up Showcase event.

The purpose of Beef Up Karumba is to bring together industry and supply chain experts, to provide an update to the grazing community on cutting edge beef production research, management practices with an emphasis work place health and safety. It was also an opportunity for participants to socialise with a Gala Ball held at the end of the two days.

Geoff Secombe explains that with the support of the grant of $14,712 they were able to put on this event to help build resilience in the area's beef business.

“As we live in a remote region of Australia we could not find a building big enough to seat 200 people in comfort. So, we hired an air-conditioned marquee to make the two days of informative and industry changing information a little easier to sit through”

“We had leading vets with herd managing practise effective business in our industry, learnt about the latest research and development tools, with updates on beef processing technology taking our industry by storm.”
“There was a field trip to the Karumba Live export facilities followed by Drone Demonstrations on how they can play a part in our business. And a captivating story from the heart by Shane Webke’s which really got people talking about ways they could improve farm safety.”

“It was a very interactive couple of days with new and old friendships flourishing as there is so much power in likeminded people coming together”.

“We are a little group of people that feed a very large group of people and we could have not possibly made this possible without the support FRRR's Tackling Tough Times Together program.”

**Bymount’s Creative Odyssey**

Bymount is a small town in south west Queensland with a population of 400. The community has limited access to creative art and cultural activities, and people cannot access skills development in the creative arts easily. The area has been affected by adverse weather and many people are suffering stress from the impact of the ongoing drought.

With support from the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation, Bymount Creative Circle received $10,000 to run a full weekend art and crafts participatory event at Injune. Fourteen creative workshops were held over a two-day period at the Creative Odyssey event, which was facilitated by eight talented artisans. The workshops covered a variety of different mediums including painting, scrapbooking, fabric dyeing, paverpol, jewellery making and sewing. The event attracted more than 150 people from far and wide with some travelling over three hours to attend. People of all ages participated, from high school students to seniors.

The event was well planned and had many positive outcomes for the participants, not least of which was the opportunity to explore their creative side and expand their skill base across a range of disciplines. This resulted in a real boost to morale in the drought stricken community, as did the opportunity to connect and share stories with others in a similar situation.

The event, A Creative Odyssey received the Maranoa Regional Council’s Award for the best cultural event at the Australia Day celebrations.

**‘Stay With Me’ program supports allied health in far north Queensland**

The tyranny of distance in the Australian outback creates a deficiency of physical support, allied-health support, emotional support and general practical resources.

Outback Futures is a response to this huge need and service deficit identified in remote Far North Queensland in terms of allied health and social / emotional issues. They run a series of Mental and Allied Health Clinics in various locations across rural and remote Queensland, offering a comprehensive range of mental and allied health services (psychology, counselling, physiotherapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, early education and literacy services).

These individual sessions are offered in conjunction with health and life-skills seminars, and supported through their “Stay With Me” program, which provides ongoing counselling and allied health consultations via phone or Skype to ensure continuity of care.
Outback Futures Ltd received a $10,000 grant, funded by the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation, to provide remote assistance to established clients in the Croydon, Etheridge, Flinders and Richmond Shires in Far North Queensland. The grant subsidised services provided by Outback Futures’ registered psychologist and learning and literary specialist, who delivered 590 “Stay With Me” hours over a four month period.

While the inadequate and problematic quality of Skype (and at times even phone services) in these remote areas made connecting with their clients challenging, Wayne Middleton, former CEO and current Director of Outback Futures said that the TTTT grant enabled these families to access the therapeutic and educational support they needed, both in crisis situations and for ongoing issues that would not otherwise have been available to them.

“Individuals made significant measurable improvements in their literacy and learning results and scores, even across that short space of time. Their level of commitment was outstanding, and they regularly attended their sessions, despite significantly increased workloads and commitments on their properties due to drought.

“We’ve affirmed the hypothesis that if appropriate services were made available to these families in ways that fit with their isolated and unique living circumstances, they would be utilised with commitment, with little or no occurrence of cancellations. The families were very dedicated to implementing programs and suggestions,” he said.

Keppel Coast Arts Council
Keppel Coast Arts Council (KCAC) is a volunteer-run not-for-profit community organisation based in Yeppoon, Queensland. Its aim is to encourage artistic expression and provide opportunities for participation in cultural experiences.

KCAC developed the annual Legend and the Locals Tour. It is a concept where a music ‘legend’, support acts and a conductor / composer travel to Queensland towns and connect with local communities through workshops and a performance that includes local artists.

In 2017, KCAC received a $50,000 Tackling Tough Times Together grant, funded by the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation, to take that year’s tour to four drought-affected areas that would otherwise not have participated in the tour.

More than just music
The four communities – Collinsville, Hughenden, Blackall and Capella - supported by the grant are all experiencing long-term drought, which severely impacts surrounding farms and employees, and puts the viability of local small businesses under extreme strain.

This project provided an outlet for drought affected communities and encouraged community participation and connection. The idea behind involving community members in the workshops and the show, as well as bringing in a ‘legend’, is to boost morale.

For many local families, attending this kind of show or participating in a music workshop is simply not an option due to distance, financial barriers and lack of opportunities.
As one local resident said, “The benefits of something like this may seem small, but these events have long lasting effects. It gives communities the confidence to put on their own performances; it gives them inspiration and makes them more creative.”

The 2017 Legend was Golden Guitar-winning Australian country music singer Sara Storer. Sara said that there was no way she was going to let down regional Queensland.

“I am really glad I did it because I have had some very moving, and overwhelming moments on this tour. It will be a highlight for many years,” Sara Storer.

Sara was supported by two musicians, one of which was Brad Butcher who is a Queenslander. Brad explained that being involved in this project was good for him because it brought him back to where he was born and raised.

“In a lot of these smaller locations in central Queensland, there are a lot of mental health issues and I think a lot of that comes down to boredom and being isolated. You’re really looking for something to do and a lot of people can get lost out there, so bringing these events to town gives people something to look forward to,” said Brad.

**Boosting morale and strengthening community**

The workshops held ahead of the show, provide a fantastic opportunity for local orchestras and talented artists to further develop their skills and receive coaching from an industry professional. Then they have the chance to perform onstage with sound and lighting.

The Legend and the Locals Tour plans to visit similar communities each year. This provides a reason for the choirs, orchestras, local bands and musicians to keep practising and performing together, as well as something for all locals to look forward to.

Kate Schlick, Project Creator, explained that many of the communities they visit don’t have a choir or orchestra, so they need to pull them together to participate in the tour.

“These communities have not come together in this way before and they community connection that they create is really inspiring,” said Sara.

The final show encourages all residents to gather together for a free evening, experiencing the musical talent their community has to offer, as well as well-known artists. Making the show accessible and affordable, allows families and friends to spend time together, without guilt, and to forget about the hardships of the drought for a night.

The event and local attractions were also marketed to attract tourists to the town, which boosted the local economy and created pride across the small communities.

One local resident praised the tour and said thanks. “Bringing artists like Sara Storer to our regional communities is invaluable for both school students and the community. It’s a really wonderful opportunity and the funding that comes into these projects - we can’t thank you enough.”

[Watch this video](#) to get a sense of the positive impact of this tour.
Dirranbandi Arts Council Inc - Workshop Without Worries
Dirranbandi locals with their workshop creations. TTTT grant used to run hobby and craft workshops to build community resilience.

Gulf Cattleman’s Association Inc - Beef Up Karumba
Provided a marquee and air conditioning for the two-day Beef Up forum in Karumba to help reduce isolation and broaden industry knowledge amongst graziers across the Gulf.

GLENRAC Inc. - Fit & Fabulous
Enhancing community connectedness and increasing awareness of mental health through the facilitation of two events.

Red Ridge Limited - Channel Country Ladies Day
Incredible turnout at the Channel Country Ladies Day in October 2015. TTTT grant used to support guest speakers to present and enable Red Ridge to offer reduced registration fees for participants.

Keppel Coast Arts Council - Legend and the Locals
Industry professional and inspiring local talent facilitate workshops and a music show with young students culminating in an entertaining event for the community to attend and participate in.
Central Highlands Science Centre - Country Road Science Show
Students enjoying the travelling Science Centre exhibition. Grant used to fund travel costs to remote and rural communities, giving students the opportunity to experience hands-on interactive learning in science.

Tenterfield District Tennis Association - Let’s be comfortable
A new split system unit installed at the Tenterfield Tennis Club to enable community groups to gather there.

Yetman Hall and Progress Association - Fun and Flicks Under the Stars
Young people attending the free outdoor movie screening funded by TTTT grant to help connect isolated locals and reducing financial barriers to participation.

Blackall Tambo Regional Council - Blackall-Tambo get going Online
Marketing and digital training workshop supporting local leaders.