

Let's Talk About the Weather | Flood Resilience Program

CASE STUDY

BACKGROUND

The October–December 2022 floods impacted 44 per cent of the Gannawarra Shire with extensive flooding across rural areas and farming districts. As part of the longer-term recovery to support community resilience to climate related events, Council worked with Jumpleads/Make a Change Australia (not-for-profit based in Bendigo), to develop a Let's Talk About the Weather | Flood Resilience Program for the Gannawarra community.

The implementation of the Let's Talk About the Weather | Flood Resilience Program complemented the needs identified during the development of community plans for six small agricultural dependent communities across Gannawarra (Quambatook & District, Lalbert & District, Lakes District, Murrabit & District, Macorna/Tragowel and Leitchville & District).

The Let's Talk About the Weather | Flood Resilience Program provided an opportunity to support ongoing community-led conversations and encourage collaborative ideas and solutions around flooding and other climate related events.

The program was supported by partners including Northern District Community Health, Agriculture Victoria, North Central Catchment Management Authority, Kerang Neighbourhood House, Cohuna Neighbourhood House and Quambatook Community Resource Centre.

The program was funded by the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments under the Commonwealth–State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) as part of the Gannawarra Community Flood Recovery Program.



CONTEXT

Let's Talk About the Weather | Flood Resilience Program was a community engagement and community-based capacity building program to raise awareness for, and support local recovery, preparedness and climate adaptation initiatives. The program was designed to activate/enable local communities to proactively respond to the challenges of extreme weather events and to share, inform and connect residents to options for adaptation and effective response by fostering community led change, through the development of bottom-up solutions.

PROGRAM DELIVERABLE

Council's flood recovery team worked with Make a Change Australia to plan and deliver a program over six-months, between June and December 2024. The program engaged with residents across the Gannawarra Shire and included a number of community engagement activities, a community-wide survey, and two local gatherings. The themes chosen for the local gatherings were 'Positive Green Spaces' (Kerang) and 'Living with Water-too much, too little, how do we adapt?' (Cohuna).

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PROGRAM AIMS:

- Generate conversation, connection and common ground in response to floods, extreme weather events and the impacts of climate related events
- Assist in normalising conversations around climate variability
- Encourage greater buy in and participation in finding locally led solutions around climate topics
- Build resilience and better prepare for future weather-related events
- Empower local leadership to keep going and effectively deliver projects/services
- Inspire new/emerging leadership across a range of community sectors
- Encourage ideas and local action around relevant themes
- Connect locals to existing initiatives and solutions that address flood resilience and climate adaptation
- Grow a database of people interested in climate adaptation and community resilience as a practical platform for Council and other local groups to continue growing interest and connection for this work - beyond the life of this program.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Highlights included:

- Engagement at the 'pop up' days – talking to locals about their own personal experiences with extreme weather
- A communications reach of over 90,000 people to raise awareness of the program themes through various channels including: email and social media campaigns
- More than 90 residents responded to the community-wide survey
- 97 people participated in the local gatherings in Kerang and Cohuna
- Local knowledge, ideas and actions created by individuals attending events – which involved participants in the topics presented and the opportunity to learn more, share ideas and wisdom, and create their own next steps.



COMMUNICATION SUMMARY

- Jumpleads Newsletter – Inclusion in September 2024 newsletter to a mailing list of 8000
- 20+ social media content posts related to this project to promote participation
- 3 additional Facebook Ads reaching up to 62,000 people
- 7 strategically designed posts shared to collated list of 30 Facebook groups and pages related to community, environment, sustainability interests in Gannawarra region plus partner pages

Register for these 2 FREE events

COMMUNITY LUNCH KERANG
POSITIVE GREEN SPACES
For our homes, workplaces, neighbourhoods & towns

Presenting:
Millie Ross, Gardening Australia
Claire Fry, Healthy Food
Angela Hird, Green Corridors

WED 13 NOV 12.30-2PM
The Grow Collective Garden, 62 Wyndham St. Kerang

COMMUNITY DINNER COHUNA
LIVING WITH WATER
Too little, too much? How do we adapt?

Presenting:
Dale Grey, Big Wets, Big Dries
Jo Bear, Farming Sustainability
Dale Boyd, Soil-Water Balances

WED 20 NOV 6PM - 7.30PM
The Big Cohuna Stockyards, 105 King George St. Cohuna

RSVP for catering:
www.makeachange.org.au/gannawarra
(03) 5450 9333

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Community Event – Let's Talk About the Weather – Positive Green Spaces - Kerang

What did the event deliver:

- The local gathering of 63 in Kerang at the Grow Collective Community Garden on Wednesday, 13 November 2024 from 12 noon.
- Key guest speaker, Millie Ross, ABC Gardening Australia, shared her gardening wisdom and her energy and philosophy on life.
- Local speakers Claire Fry, Kerang Neighbourhood House Manager and Angela Hird, Kerang Landcare President, inspired those who attended the lunch event to cultivate green spaces, contribute to the community through volunteering, adapt backyards and communities with native plants, and establish green corridors.
- Event partners included, Northern District Community Health, Kerang, Cohuna and Quambatook Neighbourhood Houses, and Kerang Landcare

EVENT RESPONSES

Attendees were asked: "What can I do next to create positive green spaces for a changing climate?"

"What can individuals do?" (responses received)

- *Always cover the soil with mulch*
- *Strategic green corridors*
- *Layered wind break plantings to north and south to break up strong hot and cold winds*
- *Plant shade trees*
- *Plant more native species*

"What can Council do?"

- *Host more fun and engaging events like this!*
- *Develop a bush tucker garden in Kerang in partnership with First Nations community members*
- *Connection to First Nations rich knowledge and connection to Country*
- *More recycling of stormwater*
- *Continue the conversation – learn from others*
- *Better promotion of suitable plant lists and resources*
- *Community education programs, events and activities that support residents to engage with the environment and want to contribute to creating positive green spaces*
- *Support the development of a Gannawarra Food Strategy*
- *Youth involvement in environmental projects*



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CASE STUDY

Community Event – Let's Talk About the Weather – “Living with Water- too much, too little, how do we adapt?”- Cohuna

What did the event deliver:

- 34 attendees at the Big Cohuna Stockyard for an evening event held on Wednesday, 20 November 2024.
- Keynote guest speaker Dale Grey, Ag Vic Seasonal Risk Agronomist, provided detailed rainfall and flood data for the last 100 years and the climate outlook for the coming season.
- Two additional guest speakers, Dale Boyd, from Agriculture Victoria delved into the soil-water balance monitoring and the benefits to the agriculture industry and local farmer, Jo Bear shared her story of sustainable farming practices developed over recent years and adapting to living on the Loddon River flood plain.
- Partners for this program were Cohuna, Kerang and Quambatook Neighbourhood Houses, North Central Catchment Management Authority, Northern District Community Health, and Agriculture Victoria.



COHUNA'S EVENT RESPONSES

Attendees were asked: “What can I do next to adapt and prepare for future floods and droughts?”

“What can individuals do?” (responses received)

- It's difficult to predict the weather – we need to be prepared regardless of what the seasonal prediction says
- Disaster preparedness training
- Harvest rainwater
- Importance of connections to overcoming loneliness and thrive as a community
- Flood proofing of homes
- Water retention on town properties and use of charcoal in gardening
- Knowledge is power – Science can inform good decision making
- Connection to First Nations rich knowledge and connection to Country
- Encourage more tree planting to stop erosion during heavy rain events
- Local emergency management plans that cross the border between NSW and Victoria (water doesn't know there is a border/government).

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Online Survey

91 Gannawarra residents participated in the online survey consisting of 11 questions exploring the participants experiences with extreme weather, learnings and topics of interest for further learnings.

SURVEY -QUESTION 1.

Have you now, recently or ever been impacted by an extreme weather event?

72 (84.71 per cent) Flood
47 (55.29 per cent) Drought
38 (44.71 pr cent Storm
23 (27.06 pr cent Heat/Fire
Other 4 (4.71 per cent) – Wind,
Insurance shock

SURVEY -QUESTION 11.

What would you like to learn more about?

27 survey responses received with the many selecting more than one option:

- 17 respondents - adaptive gardening
- 15 respondents - environment and sustainability
- 14 respondents - local community led solutions
- 13 respondents - positive green spaces
- 12 respondents - liveable and resilient homes
- 9 respondents - the impacts of extreme weather on health and wellbeing
- 1 respondent - other - *Getting more trees planted that are being cut down in Kerang.*
- 1 respondent - other - *I feel the Shire has informed myself and the local community to the best of their ability. As each flood presents its own problems, the community has the knowledge to cope. Keep in mind it is weather. Forecasters have trouble getting it right, but listening to local knowledge should be compulsory.*

SURVEY -QUESTION 3.

What was the learning or wisdom gained for you or others from this experience?

79 responses were received including:

- *That communities/people need to work together and support one another to achieve best outcomes*
- *Pre-work needed for levees. Better building design on farm track surface for transit during flooding*
- *Plenty of volunteers willing to help*
- *People/communities need to work together, support one another in the crisis and in recovery*
- *That we only had our local community to turn to. Not much outside help*
- *Preparedness is very important, when it happened and we were prepared, we reduced the impact*
- *Council needs to update drainage*
- *You can't "Control" the weather*
- *[I] Now have a drought and flood plan and resources to minimise the impact to our business*
- *Listen to the local wisdom and knowledge gained over a past history of floods in the area*
- *Important to hydrate, stay cool, check in on others*
- *With the 2022 floods, the community was given more time to decide if they wanted to evacuate or not. I stayed in Kerang and was able to help out a little at the sandbagging area. I think townspeople, emergency services and Council, had a lot more experience as to how to handle the flood the second time around*
- *There are not enough shade trees for pedestrians in the town*
- *How to prepare - importance of communication and community working together*
- *Community needs to come together to support those impacted through physical on the ground works (sandbagging, earthworks and providing meals). Those who are connected to the community prior to the event are more likely to receive the support.*