

Drought Leadership Groups

Your guide to getting started



Supporting rural and remote communities to
respond to drought and
foster community wellbeing

John's day – well worth getting out of bed for

I have been woken again by the farmer's alarm (daylight). It is being set a little bit earlier each morning and is on time today, because there is no cloud to delay its arrival. I am reluctant to rise and face the same old stuff. How good it would be to be wake up to the sound of rain on the roof, or to look out and see green grass and be planning to go mustering. But no, I can't really think of anything worth getting out of bed for.

After lying there for a while thinking about what I am going to do first and telling myself (again) that the jobs won't do themselves, I rise and start the day. First things first, let the dogs out for a run. As usual they are pleased to see me. The sight of their grinning faces and playful antics brightens my morning. They were worth getting out of bed for!



After breakfast I load up the Toyota with dry lick and think about how hard it is to get now as demand is outstripping supply. That done I set off to put it out and check watering points.

On the way I drive through the heifers and notice that because they are leaner than normal, most of them are calving more easily – a blessing in disguise. It is soon bought home to me that not all of them are calving without trouble when I notice one with just the toes of the calf showing. I decide to check her again on the way back.

At the first lick trough the cows crowd around and start eating while I am still putting it out. It is certainly making them quiet – every cloud has a silver lining. No need to go to Merv's dam as it dried up weeks ago. At least on our low country we have the bores and infrastructure to pump stock water. The windmill has been keeping the water up, so there is no need to start the pump there – another blessing I guess.

On the way home I check on the heifer and the calf hasn't moved. I'll need to get her in. The grass in the horse paddock is about as interesting as the rest of the place, so the horses are already at the yard waiting for a feed and this saves me one job.

As I bring the heifer home the calf's head still hasn't appeared and I am pretty sure it is dead, but I can at least save the mother. Because she is so quiet, when I get her in the yard, I am able to get a rope on the calf's front feet without putting her up the crush. After a bit of heaving the nostrils appear and it seems to be breathing, but it is a battle to get the rest of the head through. When I eventually get that to happen, the body follows with ease and I find I have delivered a live and healthy bull calf. After cleaning the fluid out of his nostrils and mouth I stand at the trough rinsing my hands and watching his mother check him out. This was worth getting out of bed for!

When the jobs are done, I start thinking about the neighbour up the road – he is doing it a bit tough – so I head over. We start retelling a few old tales (that get better every time) and our troubles are momentarily forgotten. Well worth getting out of bed for!

John Watkins
Springsure, Queensland

Contents

- 1. Using this guide4
- 2. Why Drought Leadership Groups.....4
 - 2.1 Highlights from drought research4
 - 2.1.1 Preparedness, prevention and planning4
 - 2.1.2 Response5
 - 2.1.3 Recovery and resilience5
- 3. Planning the Drought Leadership Group – what’s involved6
 - 3.1 Get together6
 - 3.2 Develop a plan6
 - 3.3 Share a vision7
 - 3.4 Invite stakeholders and members7
 - 3.5 Structure and governance arrangements7
 - 3.6 Gain recognition.....8
- 4. Build strong partnerships.....8
 - 4.1 Stop, think and check your own readiness8
 - 4.2 Decide what partnering means to the group.....9
 - 4.3 Identify and understand your partners.....9
 - 4.4 Create sustainable partnerships9
 - 4.5 Communicate 10
 - 4.6 Evaluate..... 10
- 5. Understand your community..... 10
 - 5.1 Measure community progress 10
 - 5.1.1 Indicators of wellbeing 10
 - 5.2 Engage the community 11
- 6. What’s next 12
- 7. More information and resources 12
- 8. Acknowledgements 12

1. Using this guide

Establishing a Drought Leadership Group should be a relatively simple process. This guide has been developed to outline, in a logical manner, the general steps involved when starting a group.

It should be noted that there are no hard and fast rules to setting up the Drought Leadership Group and the steps involved may vary depending on the particular circumstances of each group and community.

The information in this guide is intended for general use. You may choose to do things slightly differently and in a different order. Likewise, the resources that support this guide are intended to be adapted to suit the needs of the particular group and community.

2. Why Drought Leadership Groups

The idea to establish Drought Leadership Groups was an outcome from consultation with rural and remote community leaders in the North West and Central Queensland regions.

While the role of Drought Leadership Groups will vary from community to community, their broad role is to:

- support local communities as drought impacts mental health and wellbeing
- develop partnerships that enable responses to drought to be planned and implemented in conjunction with local communities
- act as a liaison point for governments so local communities have input into the allocation of drought resources, where appropriate.

2.1 Highlights from drought research

Australians are not unfamiliar with drought and natural disasters which are estimated to cost governments around \$2.3 billion per year¹. As at March 2016, only seven per cent of very remote Queensland and 14 per cent of remote Queensland were drought free². These events impact on property and infrastructure, and have a heavy toll on health and wellbeing, particularly for those people who live in rural and remote areas³.

Following are some of the highlights from current research into drought and natural disasters.

2.1.1 Preparedness, prevention and planning

- Drought cannot be prevented but the negative impact on the community can may be able to be reduced.
- Locality and supply of services are major influencing factors in rural and remote communities, and their ability to prepare for drought.
- Preparedness is developed through education and understanding. Being aware of measures to prevent damage is important and highlights the need for adequate and timely information to be provided prior to and during a drought.
- Preventative actions are difficult as drought is unpredictable in terms of severity and duration. The chronic ongoing effects of drought must be pre-empted to prevent devastating loss.
- The planning process is an important component of any preparation or prevention as it enables intent to be communicated; roles and responsibilities to be clarified; a shared language to be developed; issues that may arise to be anticipated; and recovery practices to be community focused⁴.

¹ Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience and Safer Communities, 2013

² Queensland Treasury (2016) unpublished

³ Morrissey & Reser 2007

⁴ Emergency Management Australia, 2011

2.1.2 Response

- Community responses work best when they address all or some of the social determinants of health and wellbeing. The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, and provide a basis from which to assess and plan for healthy communities⁵. They are outlined in Diagram 1 below.
- Locally developed responses that address the social determinants of health and wellbeing will encourage communities to feel empowered, enable social activity, build on resilience, develop procedures that local communities are proud of and maintain community integrity. These activities are important in being prepared for, responding to and recovering from the effects of drought.



Diagram 1: Social determinants of health – markers of community wellbeing

2.1.3 Recovery and resilience

- Drought assistance is often short lived but the duration of the impact of drought can be long term.
- Resilience allows a person or community to move through a challenge, adapt to that challenge if necessary, and then return to a relatively healthy state of being⁶.
- Building community resilience is important because communities still require support when no longer in a state of drought. Resilience requires a number of factors including:
 - trust and social cohesion
 - supporting attitudes and values
 - leadership
 - a sense of community
 - good communication and information
 - collective efficacy
 - community involvement
 - resource dependency
 - social capital
 - existing norms

⁵ World Health Organisation, 2011

⁶ Arbon, 2014

- engagement with government⁷.

3. Planning the Drought Leadership Group – what’s involved

Clear planning that meets the needs of individuals and wellbeing of communities is one way to manage the impact of drought. This process can be supported by the formation of Drought Leadership Groups.

An effective Drought Leadership Group with clear roles and expectations will influence the success of local drought responses. In fact, a well-established Drought Leadership Group will provide a form of community governance, or a:

... collective activity that is entered into by those whose lives are affected by the decisions that are made....through their positive contributions to the life of their community, people living there are able to shape the community in a way that suits them⁸.

Leaders can come from all sectors of the community and all walks of life.

While every community will have different needs, different skills in its members and different expectations, leadership will be essential to the overall success of all Drought Leadership Groups.

3.1 Get together

Find a core group of concerned community members to establish a small lead group to start the process of forming a Drought Leadership Group.

Step 1 Form your initial lead group

The size of the initial group is not linked to its success. Rather, it is the influence this group has within the community that will drive success. Collaboration and partnership between community members is required. A key question to ask at this stage is why are you working to form a leadership group and what is its purpose? A key reason needs to be to plan and manage the impacts of drought

locally.

As you answer this question you may find there are existing groups in your community able to undertake the roles required to support local drought responses. If this is the case, you can approach these groups to see if they share the vision and would like to enter into a partnership.

Read about partnerships in section 4

3.2 Develop a plan

Establishing a local Drought Leadership Group needs to be a considered and planned process recognising and responding to local need.

Step 2 Develop an implementation plan for your group

A good way to manage the establishment of the group is to develop an implementation plan. You can modify or adapt the implementation plan template to the group’s needs.

The template outlines the key steps you can take from forming the group through to deciding what you can do in your local community.

Resource
Implementation plan template

⁷ Emergency Management Australia, 2011

⁸ <http://www.futurecommunities.net/ingredient/53/what-do-we-mean-governance-engagement-and-accountability>

3.3 Share a vision

It is important to be clear on the purpose and role of the group. What are you doing and why are you doing it? This means thinking about what the Drought Leadership Group would like to achieve for the community.

Step 3

Decide what your group will set out to achieve in your community

The group's vision will be unique to your community but will be linked to supporting your community respond to the impacts of drought. It should reflect your community's unique issues and local capacity.

When developing a vision it is important to value everyone's ideas as a shared vision will inspire shared commitment from the group.

Once the group has developed an initial vision for what it wants to achieve, you can invite members of the community to become part of the group.

3.4 Invite stakeholders and members

There will be individuals and groups who easily identify with the vision of the initial group and will become part of the broader Drought Leadership Group. However, it is important to recognise the diversity of stakeholder groups in your community and for the group to be as representative as possible.

Below is a list of stakeholders to consider inviting. The list is not inclusive and not all groups will be present in every community.

Step 4

Consider key stakeholders and members for the group

- Community leaders
- Local government
- Government organisations
- Non-government organisations
- Industry groups and leaders
- Community groups
- Business groups and leaders
- Public and private medical, nursing and allied health staff
- Health service providers
- Allied health groups and leaders
- Relevant State and Federal Government departments
- Queensland Health (local, district, state/policy levels)
- Primary Health Networks
- Queensland Ambulance Service, local branch and district headquarters

There will also be individuals who may be interested in becoming involved or with skills or experience that will be useful to the group.

A diverse membership will ensure there is a broad recognition of the Drought Leadership Group with other organisations and allow extensive networks to develop in your community. The group's size should reflect the issues and level of interest in your community.

3.5 Structure and governance arrangements

It is important to clearly establish how the community's Drought Leadership Group will operate.

Step 5

Define what your group will do and develop your terms of reference

The group will need to consider a lot of the practical issues necessary to maintain an effective leadership group such as:

- meeting location
- frequency and length
- membership parameters
- decision making methods

- participation between meetings.

At this point you should clarify the group's role as a stand-alone group or as part of a regional network. Even if an existing group is taking on the role of the Drought Leadership Group, it will need to consider factors such as membership, structure and governance.

The terms of reference will describe the purpose and structure of the group. Creating detailed terms of reference is critical as they define the:

Resource
Terms of reference template

- vision, objectives, scope and deliverables (what has to be achieved)
- stakeholders, roles and responsibilities (who will take part in it)
- resource, financial and quality plans (how it will be achieved)
- agreed frequency and schedule (when it will be achieved).

3.6 Gain recognition

The intention is for the Drought Leadership Group to be a recognised point of contact for government departments working to support the provision of programs or funding to the community.

Therefore, it is important the group is recognised as credible and has local support. Formal recognition for the group might come from local government so seek the support of your Mayor and Chief Executive Officer prior to consulting with other levels of government.

Complete the suggested letter to make initial contact with government bodies in your community.

Resource
Endorsement letter template

You will also need to let everyone in your community know about the Drought Leadership Group and what the group hopes to achieve. You can do this a number of ways:

Step 6

Have your group recognised at a local level to give it legitimacy and celebrate

- contact your local newspaper or radio station
- organise a community event or partner with an existing community gathering
- promote the group via community noticeboards, school newsletters, community groups, social media etc.

4. Build strong partnerships

Step 7

Become a strong partner in your community

Now that you have successfully established the Drought Leadership Group, it is critical to develop partnerships. Community responses to any situation require strong partnerships. But what makes successful partnerships? The following section provides a summary of some of the information and resources on how to build successful partnerships.

4.1 Stop, think and check your own readiness

- Confirm the Drought Leadership Group cannot solve a particular issue and consider other ways to address the issue/s. Then, consider if the Drought Leadership Group is ready to partner with others in your region. Some questions to consider:
 - *Have we determined with whom we want to partner and why?*
 - *Are we communicating our intentions and listening to the concerns of our people?*
 - *Are we sufficiently flexible and prepared to respond to change?*

- Do we have the right skills?⁹

4.2 Decide what partnering means to the group

- Consider some of the key definitions of partnering and discuss these with your potential partners to see if you share a common belief:
 - Organisations work together in a transparent, equitable and mutually beneficial manner towards a goal. Partners agree to commit resources and share the risks as well as the benefits¹⁰.
 - A commitment to work collaboratively to pursue a common purpose¹¹.
 - A commitment to work together on something that concerns both, to develop a shared sense of purpose and agenda, and to generate joint action towards agreed targets¹².
- The purpose of identifying or creating a definition of partnering and how the leadership group will operate is that you can relate back to this meaning. A common definition also helps create a common language and understanding.

4.3 Identify and understand your partners

- Organisations choose to partner because they cannot achieve their desired goals by other means. In other words, there is inevitably a level of self-interest in the motivation of all partners. Each partner will need to see benefits from their collaboration, measured in their own terms, if their involvement in the partnership is to be sustained over time¹³.
- Each sector brings a different set of values, priorities, resources and competencies to a partnership. It is important to consider where your potential partner is coming from and what it is that will motivate them to get involved.
- You may need someone to help facilitate your partnering process. This can be the role of a Partnership Broker who can be internal to the group or someone who is contracted independently to help facilitate the process¹⁴. They can support and strengthen partnerships by helping to initiate, develop, maintain, review, revise and support multi-stakeholder collaboration through a deep knowledge and understanding of what it takes to collaborate effectively.

The challenge of any partnership is to bring these diverse contributions together, linked by a common vision, in order to achieve sustainable goals.

4.4 Create sustainable partnerships

- There are three basic principles to successful partnering:
 1. **Equity:** an equal right to be at the table, and a recognition that contributions to the partnership can be in different forms.
 2. **Transparency:** relationships are based on openness and honesty, and people will be truly accountable.
 3. **Mutual benefit:** partners can achieve specific benefits over and above common benefits to all.
- Some of the most sustaining partnerships have been so, not only because of the mutually beneficial outcomes, but because of the relationships built. Five successful community building activities, as outlined by Paul Born in his book *Deepening Community*, are:
 1. Sharing your story
 2. Enjoying one another
 3. Caring for one another (build social capital)
 4. Taking care of one another (empathy and belonging)
 5. Working together for a better world (collective altruism), which follows naturally if you work on

⁹ <http://constructingexcellence.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/partnering.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://thepartneringinitiative.org/>

¹¹ <http://www.iandixon.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/WhitePaper-PartneringSolutions.pdf>

¹² http://www.vcross.org.au/documents/VCOSS%20docs/HSPIC/00911_vcoss_partner_guide_1_WEB.pdf

¹³ <http://thepartneringinitiative.org/about-us/philosophy-and-approach/the-benefits-and-risks-of-partnering/>

¹⁴ <http://partnershipbrokers.org/w/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/What-do-Partnership-Broker-Do.pdf>

the first four activities¹⁵.

4.5 Communicate

- Comprehensive, constant and regular internal and external communication is critical. Strong feedback loops are required at all levels within the partnership and with partner organisations. You need to be able to share and access all knowledge and information¹⁶.
- When you communicate, remember to tell the story:
Telling a meaningful story means inspiring your listeners ... to understand the conclusions you have reached and then decide for themselves whether or not to believe what you say... People value their own conclusions more highly than yours. Once people make the story you have told into their story, you have tapped into a powerful force¹⁷.

4.6 Evaluate

- An evaluation process helps you determine whether or not the partnership is meeting its goals¹⁸. It is also a great opportunity to explore ways in which the partnership could be strengthened and refined, to celebrate and showcase achievements.
- You can use the partnership self-assessment tool as part of the ongoing evaluation process.

Resource
Partnership self-assessment tool
<https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/the-partnerships-analysis-tool>

5. Understand your community

The Drought Leadership Group will need to review the impacts of drought on the health and wellbeing of your community. The decision on how this will occur, and what needs you will focus on, is one for the Drought Leadership Group.

5.1 Measure community progress

The idea of wellbeing as a measure of progress is rapidly gaining support worldwide. The word 'wellbeing' can be used interchangeably with related concepts such as 'quality of life', 'life satisfaction' or 'wellness', 'health' and 'mental health', to give just a few examples.

Step 8
 Decide how you will measure local need

In order to consistently determine the needs of your community, the indicators for community wellbeing have been used with each of the social determinants of health (see page 5 and move clockwise around the diagram) falling under one of the broad indicators of wellbeing. The Drought Leadership Group will need to decide which of the indicators of community wellbeing are most relevant to your community.

5.1.1 Indicators of wellbeing

Human Capital (confidence in skills and education, health, community leadership and collaboration)

- **Education:** Number of enrolments in schools locally. The number of students enrolled in boarding schools. Students' ability to attend extra-curricular programs.
- **Early Childhood:** Support services available to mothers and young children. Education programs for early childhood. Early intervention programs available locally.
- **Leadership:** The effectiveness of leadership, collaboration and partnerships within the community and local organisations.

Social Capital (spending time with friends and family, getting involved in the local community, sense

¹⁵ <http://book.deepeningcommunity.org>

¹⁶ <http://thepartneringinitiative.org/tpi-tools/toolbook-series/talking-the-walk/>

¹⁷ <http://intersector.com/toolkit/#tools>

¹⁸ The Department of Education and Training Victoria

of belonging)

- **Social Connectedness:** The connections between members of the community as individuals and families. The connectedness of community organisations and service providers. Awareness of local social or support organisations. Opportunities for community interaction.
- **Culture:** Opportunities for the development of cultural and arts programs locally. Support for the development of local cultural events.
- **Health and Social Services:** The perceived health and wellbeing of the community and individuals within the community. The level of access to health and social services and their role and effectiveness within the community. Local knowledge of and access to available services. Gaps in services.

Institutional Capital (having a say and being heard, equity and inclusion)

- **Access:** Level of access to essential services, health, communication, social services and community planning.
- **Gender:** Perception of inclusion of genders and safety of individuals in the community.
- **Ethnicity:** Perception of inclusion of diverse cultures within the community. Acceptance of indigenous people and other ethnic groups within the community.

Physical Capital (access to services and infrastructure, access to telecommunications, crime and safety, landscape and aesthetics)

- **Housing:** Available, affordable housing and current housing vacancies.
- **Built environment:** Level of access to the required community infrastructure. Recreational places and events available. Safety and crime statistics for the region.

Natural Capital (perceived environmental health)

- **Physical Environment:** The current drought status and stocking numbers. Length of recovery time for affected land.

Financial Capital (household financial wellbeing, local economic wellbeing)

- **Employment and working conditions:** Number of people employed or unemployed and searching for work. The number of positions vacant. The number of positions lost.
- **Income:** Changes in levels of income to households and individuals. The turnover and profit margins in local businesses. The level of funding available to publically funded services and also the income base for the region.

5.2 Engage the community

Step 9

Consider how you will engage with your community

The Drought Leadership Group will become an important facilitator of local involvement in the planning and delivery of activities for your local community while it is affected by drought.

So the group can engage effectively, there are a number of principles to consider.

The Drought Leadership Group should:

- Understand your community and its capacity, strengths and priorities. This can be achieved through:
 - respectful use of local knowledge and experience
 - tapping into existing networks
 - identifying and acknowledging community capability and sharing resources
 - appreciating the risks faced by your community

- assessing risk and levels of community awareness and preparedness¹⁹.
- Recognise your community’s complexity which may include:
 - ensuring differences and diversity are embraced and respected
 - using genuinely respectful and flexible approaches
 - identifying and addressing barriers to engagement
 - recognising that your community will evolve and change over time²⁰.
- Support existing networks and resources. This can be achieved through:
 - building and maintaining partnerships
 - fostering relationships with community leaders
 - respecting community choices
 - building on existing social capital
 - identifying and employing strategies that empower local action.

6. What’s next

Now that you have established the group and understand about partnerships and how to engage the community, you are ready to do some real work.

You can use the knowledge you have gained so far to assess the need within your local community and develop an action plan to address this need.

Resources
Action plan template
Sample action plan from the
Springsure Drought
Leadership Group

7. More information and resources

If you would like more information on any aspect of the ‘Guide to getting started’ you can refer to:

- ‘A hand up – not a hand out’: a reference tool from which the guide was developed.
- The literature review undertaken in the development of ‘A hand up – not a hand out’: A review of literature and research on mental health and wellbeing in rural and remote communities affected by drought.
- ‘Hand in Hand’: The Springsure Drought Leadership Group Action Plan 2016.

8. Acknowledgements

Funding to develop these resources was provided by the Queensland Department of Health, Queensland Department of Communities and Queensland Mental Health Commission.

In kind support was provided by Central Queensland Rural Health, North West Hospital and Health Service, Julia Creek Shire Council, Central Highlands Regional Council, Longreach Health and Hospital Service, and CentacareCQ.

¹⁹ Emergency Management Australia, 2013

²⁰ Ibid