



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **FUNDING TO IMPROVE BUSINESS VIABILITY IN DROUGHT AFFECTED GIPPSLAND**

Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) Gippsland is pleased to welcome funding from the Victorian Government, and the Financial Counselling Foundation (FCF), together with the ANZ Bank to support and strengthen small rural businesses in the drought-affected areas of Gippsland.

The additional funding will enable RFCS Gippsland to expand services and provide free professional assistance to rural businesses also experiencing financial hardship, while continuing to assist farmers.

Kylie Holmes, Executive Officer of RFCS Gippsland commended the acknowledgement and support that will be provided to the many small businesses also suffering from the drought, “The on-flow effects of the drought impact the whole community, particularly businesses when farmers have less money to spend, even for essentials.”

Based in Bairnsdale, RFCS Gippsland will appoint a Rural Business Coordinator to commence engagement with business owners and stakeholders to identify the most needed and suitable service offerings that will help build long-term resilience.

Together with the Rural Business Coordinator, RFCS Gippsland can provide industry specific and experienced business mentors, coaches and training providers to work regularly with clients, improving their viability, as well as help set, plan and achieve their immediate and long-term goals.

Previous Minister for Agriculture, Jaala Pulford announced during a \$25m Drought Preparedness and Support Package for farming communities in East and Central Gippsland, “We’re backing our farmers across the state, ... and building resilience in other areas impacted by record low rainfall and climate change.”

The Chair of the Financial Counselling Foundation, George Brouwer said that the grants provided “reflect the Foundation’s funding principles of identifying clear needs or gaps in support”. While Michelle Commandeur, Head of Financial Inclusion at ANZ concurred “the drought is having a significant impact on communities across Australia. In supporting the Financial Counselling Foundation, we know small businesses experiencing hardship in these communities will also receive the financial counselling support they need.”

Small businesses impacted by the drought will now be able to access support services through RFCS Gippsland. Interested businesses are encouraged to contact them on 1300 045 747 to find out about this new service.

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