



# “Hand in Hand”



Springsure Drought Leadership Group

Action Plan – 2016





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## **Executive Summary**

The community of Springsure in Central Queensland has come together to establish a drought leadership group with the long term vision of 'drought proofing' their community.

The Springsure Drought Leadership Group has identified the strengths and issues confronting their community including the local economy and infrastructure, education levels, social connectedness, culture, housing, health and social services.

Based on these issues they have developed an action plan that aims to build community mental health and wellbeing. It focuses on strengthening resilience, preparing for drought, supporting the community during the drought and into recovery. The Drought Leadership Group is also working to establish a rural mentoring network with an aim to provide some immediate contact and support before sourcing outside intervention.

This group will provide a point of contact for local groups and individuals as well as organisations outside the community. They aim to plan for their community to ensure the effects of drought are minimised for all residents. They also aim to ensure that for those affected by drought there are support services available and a strong community network to assist as required.

## **Background**

In 2014, in response to a series of community roundtables, the Queensland Mental Health Commission, Queensland Health, and the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services agreed to support regionally-led groups to develop a toolkit to support communities in the ongoing impact of drought.

Springsure community is one of two pilot communities implementing the resources within the tool kit. Members of the group have been drawn from all areas of the community including health, education, agriculture, local business, religious groups and other interested parties. The "Hand in Hand" group was formed in August 2015 and has been working through the resources to develop the following drought plan for their community.

## **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of the project is to develop a resource that promotes the development of a community's wellbeing. The toolkit will provide resources to allow communities to plan, implement and review initiatives to sustain access to activities for the broader community and individuals within the community. The toolkit includes resources to support –

- Local governance models
- Mental Health Assessment and Planning at the local level
- Education and training options for communities
- Locally based community led strategies
- State Government-led initiatives
- Federal Government-led initiatives

- Financial options to support community-based mental health activities
- Workforce initiatives within communities and the region
- Remote support options using technology
- Ongoing education and planning

Local leadership is invaluable in changing the way assessment, planning and delivery of support is provided to drought-affected communities across Queensland. Funding was provided, a reference group and project team were established and a desk top literature review was completed. Further direction was initially sought from four communities: Julia Creek, McKinlay, Springsure and Emerald through a local consultation process. Resources were collected and collated and a draft toolkit was prepared and is in the process of being reviewed.

## **Vision**

The group has the long term vision of making their community drought-resilient. Their aim is develop a plan for all aspects of the community that will ensure that there are actions that will build resilience, prepare for drought, support the community during drought and ensure a successful recovery from drought.

## **Summary of Data Collection / Needs Analysis**

The group recognised the need to be able to clearly show there is documented evidence of needs within the community. This process has sometimes been difficult as there is not always local data available. The group is aware that where there is a perception of lack of access to services or a lack of awareness of available services, or that there is a small group requiring services, alternate service delivery may be an option.

The group has undertaken a survey of individuals within the community, with 46 responses. There have been some local interviews to access information in relations to services, a desktop data review to identify answers to specific questions and a survey of service providers.

The data collection process has highlighted the need to ensure there are a number of data sources and that issues are validated with other sources. Some published data is only available for large areas so needed to be checked with local individuals or agencies. Some service data was not available from the HHS or PHN so needed to be obtained locally.

Data and results have been considered in line with the social determinants to ensure there is development in all areas. Increasing the community's wellbeing will ensure the need for specific illness-related and mental health programs are minimised (but remain accessible for those members of the community who need access to services).

Full reports for data collected to date have been included as attachments with this plan. This data will be the baseline for comparison at 12 months.

## Financial Capital

One of the key impacts of drought is the financial impacts on individuals, families and the community. These impacts are felt across the community. Access to support funding for all members of the community is essential but longer term economic diversification and financial planning for drought are options which need further development.

**Income** – *Changes in levels of income to households and individuals. The turnover and profit margins in local businesses. The level of funding available to publicly funded services and also the income base for the region.*

The individual surveys revealed a wide spread of income with 10% of respondents living below the poverty line; the ABS census data reveals an average income of \$40,000 per year per person. Two small businesses in the community have closed in the last year. Two homes have been sold due to foreclosures; no larger properties have been sold due to foreclosures. 79% of the local survey respondents felt local businesses were not doing well.

SEIFA index from the 2011 ABS<sup>1</sup> do not reflect the impact of the drought but give a broad comparison for later reference. The SEIFA data shows the influence of the resource sector on the general population.

2011 Postal Area Code (POA)		4722
Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage	Score	1000
	Decile	6
Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage	Score	1018
	Decile	7
Index of Economic Resources	Score	1041
	Decile	8
Index of Education and Occupation	Score	945
	Decile	4
Usual Resident Population		1643

**Employment and working conditions** – *Number of people employed or unemployed and searching for work. The number of positions vacant. The number of positions lost.*

Employment options are limited in Springsure with the drought reducing property employment and the resources downturn impacting on mining employment. The drought leadership group recognises that people seeking employment will often relocate to other places when positions are not available in Springsure. The number of job losses relating to drought has not been confirmed due to Centrelink privacy limitations and locals moving to alternate employment. Anecdotally one of the first losses in drought is property staff as properties reduce stock and labour expenses.

90% of people surveyed felt their jobs were secure, 91% worked regular hours with a variety of employment options from full time to low hours. Apprenticeships and traineeships are limited in the

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/2033.0.55.0012011?OpenDocument>

community. Anecdotally though, the leadership group is aware of local youth who have wanted to come back to Springsure and have found local positions.

## **Human Capital**

**Education** – *Number of enrolments in schools locally. The number of students enrolled in boarding schools. Students ability to attend extra-curricular programs. Specific activities within schools provided to support students.*

Enrolments in schools have remained relatively static with no noticeable changes related to drought. Very small schools in surrounding communities have remained open and are now teaching the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation in many areas. Boarding schools remain accessible for most families, there have been some changes with the introduction of year 7 to high school. Springsure State School has students to Year 10. Enrolments are higher for Primary School with some students travelling to Emerald or boarding for high school. Data on parents accessing education subsidies was not available.

The schools in Springsure are focal points for the community and work actively with the community to support families at risk and ensure there is access to extracurricular activities. Resilience programs are available to schools. Support for parents in at risk communities is limited as are intervention programs for children and parents is limited to those provided within schools.

**Early Childhood** – *Support services available to mothers and young children. Education programs for early childhood. Early intervention programs available locally.*

Playgroup is active in Springsure. Childhealth services are provided within General Practice and the Multi-purpose Health Service. There are no day care services either centre or family based in Springsure. The Isolated Childrens' Parents Association is active and supports members. The use of nannies for isolated families is common with no known problems recruiting to positions. There is the option for day attendance at schools and there are often local opportunities for interaction between children and nannies working in isolated situations.

There is a need for early childhood intervention programs, locally based health services to support children with special needs and developmental support. There are also at risk families that would benefit from direct support.

**Leadership** – *The effectiveness of local leaderships, collaborations and partnerships within the community and local organisations*

The community survey shows general support for the local council and confirms local groups have sustained membership and leadership within the groups. The drought leadership group has filled a need for local leadership in supporting the emotional and social well-being within the community. There are many local collaborations and partnerships that are extremely effective in delivering specific community events or services. Many of these groups respond to a specific need or an organisation charter or task. There is an opportunity locally to involve groups in a community wide



plan to ensure there are local responses and other events that positively impact community wellbeing.

Although there are local networks around particular events or interests in the community there is a need for leadership to develop capacity within the community and responses to drought and other issues affecting the whole community.

## **Social Capital**

**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.*

There are 19 groups active in Springsure, some are sporting groups, others support arts or social groups. 100% of community survey respondents felt Springsure was a great place to live, although only 52% felt the community had a bright future. Central Highlands Regional Council supports some community events, others are organised by local organisations with funds raised locally or supported by community grants or funds such as the Regional Arts Development Fund.

The Drought Leadership Group has identified a gap in social opportunities for young adults especially those between 18 and 25. There are also no programs or activities which specifically connect those affected by drought.

**Culture** – *Opportunities for the development of cultural and arts programs locally. Support for the development of local cultural events.*

Cultural activities are well developed in Springsure with a variety of opportunities and events held locally. There are a number of local groups and a broad diversity of funding options to support local arts development.

**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 service and their role and effectiveness within the community. Local knowledge of and access to available services. Gaps in services.*

The community survey showed 78% of respondents were satisfied with their health. Health services permanently located in Springsure include the Multi-Purpose Health Service, Queensland Ambulance Service facility and the local General Practice. Some services are provided as outreach services in these locations and other services provide visiting services in alternate locations. Social services are located in Emerald with limited outreach services to Springsure.

It has been quite difficult to quantify services and visit times for outreach providers. These services also tend to change frequently with no communication to the community or local services. Many community members are not aware of services available locally or in Emerald. The local hospital staff and GP were also not aware of some services.

Services are delivered by single providers with little or no collaborative planning or consultation with the community or service providers based in the community. Accessing clear data on available services, waiting lists, health profile for the community and options for integration are difficult to quantify and need a more collaborative approach with local leadership.

**Access** – *Level of access to essential services, health, communication, social services and community planning.*

Community survey from Springsure indicates 24% of the people feel services are needed in the area of Springsure. This may be indicative of the population whom are requiring ongoing needs within the health services. The survey suggests that 60% of the community are happy with the services provided, even though most of the Health Services available to the Springsure community are 70 kilometres away in Emerald. Some people have difficulties attending services in Emerald as there is no public transport available in or out of Springsure.

There are no social service groups located in Springsure. Limited outreach is provided from Emerald. A youth worker provides visiting services. There is concern about high risk families within the community. There is potential to develop and integrated service response which targets identified families and provides direct planned support.

## **Institutional Capital**

**Gender** – *Perception of inclusion of genders and safety of individuals in the community.*

Census data indicates there are 52.5% male and 47.8% female with a median age of 38 years. It was noted that 63.2% of the population is between 15 and 65. The Community Survey depicts 94% either agree or strongly agree that the community feels safe.

Anecdotal data from police and local council indicate low crime rates. Rural crime rates are also low.

**Ethnicity** – *Perception of inclusion of diverse cultures within the community. Acceptance of indigenous people and other ethnic groups within the community.*

The Drought Leadership Group has identified that 2% or less are Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islanders. Aboriginal families are well accepted in to the community as are other ethnic residents.

## **Physical Capital**

**Housing** – *Available, affordable housing and current housing vacancies.*

The Community Survey shows that less than 30% feel that housing is affordable in the community. Rental tenure with Real Estate agents accounts for 40 per cent of housing tenures in Springsure, which is in the Bowen Basin, as opposed to only 31 per cent in other areas of Queensland. Evidence indicates that the median land and house prices in the area have increased since 2006 Bureau of Statistics were collated. Fluctuations exist according to the boom/bust cycle.

According to local real estate, there are 26 housing vacancies available for sale or empty. Rental prices vary between \$200 and \$350 per week. There are currently vacant houses on properties as they are not required for employees and properties have amalgamated leaving vacant housing.

The need for Emergency accommodation is limited but can be provided through local hotels until other accommodation is located.

**Built environment** – *Level of access to the required community infrastructure. Recreational places and events available. Safety and crime statistics for the region.*

There are parks, pool, sporting grounds, Lions Park, JC Park and Walking track in the Springsure area. Springsure and District have the Old Rainworth Fort and other natural geographical features when maintained provide opportunities for family activities e.g. Staircase Range, Fred's Lookout and the Dilly Beds. Some of these areas need maintenance and could be the focus for further investment during difficult times.

The Drought Leadership group state there are regular events in the community such as: markets, race days, sporting activities for all ages (golf, football, swimming, clay pigeon and bench rest shooting) , the craft groups, church groups, arts council, art exhibitions at the library, activities for seniors, Springsure Agricultural Show, Bullarama, periodic car rally's; and regular camp drafting events. (Drought Leadership Group, 2016) This is supported by the website promoting and informing the activity of Springsure to entice health professionals to the town.

The Community Survey indicates that the community is very happy with the events and activities that Springsure has to offer. There is a small percentage of the population that remain isolated through distance and financial hardship.

People feel safe in the community and are open and welcoming with places to congregate and areas that are maintained to encourage the sense of community.

## **Natural Capital**

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

Drought declared areas include the CHRC area west of the Gregory Highway to Emerald, South of the Capricorn Highway to the Duaringa/ Bauhinia Road and south of the Dawson Highway to the shire boundary. It also includes the CHRC area south of the Capricorn Highway with partial declarations to the remaining CHRC areas.

Stock numbers have been reduced with some selling and others adjusted. The impact of these reductions on the region and the process to restock is not clear without further local consultation.

There are variations across the region on the impact of the extended drought on the environment and the length of time required for the land to fully recover. This time affects the viability of rural

industry and needs to be identified to ensure support is provided until the affected land has recovered.

## Issues Identified

1. Impact on Whole community of the economic downturn associated with drought
2. Ensuring services and support are provided for all businesses affected by drought
3. Ensuring there is access to services for any members of the community experiencing financial hardship
4. Positions have been lost due to drought with limited alternative employment
5. Apprenticeships and traineeships are not available locally
6. Early intervention programs for children
7. Programs to support at risk families
8. Leadership with a focus on drought and community well being
9. Mentorship and support for rural residents
10. Lack of clarity in available health services
11. No local social services, especially for youth and at risk families
12. No collaborative planning for the delivery of health and social services
13. Services are not integrated and a delivered in isolation
14. Planned infrastructure development / maintenance for the community
15. Leadership with a focus on drought/rural hardship and community wellbeing

## Local SWOT Analysis

### Strengths

#### Group strengths

- Working together as the group has a strong direction and history within the community
- Diversity within the group with representatives from many areas of interest eg rural, agriculture, sport
- A common goal and direction to drought proof their community
- A passion for the Springsure and the smaller surrounding regions
- Strong local knowledge of community and rural issues and organisations and groups which are active within the community
- specific skills,
- broad community skills.

#### Community Strengths

- Size is a strength with many locals able to participate and be heard
- History and pride in the local community build a strong bond
- Connected to their community and each other through a life time of participation
- Caring for each other and the local environment
- Resilient and strong in the face of many adversities
- Diversity among the residents and many new families and different skills and cultures
- A strong volunteer base has been the success of many community projects

## Weaknesses

### Group Weaknesses

- Data collection (numbers) can be difficult to find that are relevant locally,
- Communication to community is not clear and will need to be a priority for the group.
- vulnerable to criticism for the broader community or other groups
- small group (burn out) with too few members taking on the majority of the work
- new people – new ideas and resources become stretched
- lack of funding to support local activities or staffing

### Community Weaknesses

- Big geography and vast distance between individuals
- not knowing services available locally or regionally
- some people isolated (not inclusive) by nature
- drought-related stress is affecting the whole community
- isolation between individuals and within the region
- self-doubt for community members and organisations
- roads/public transport are not well maintained or available
- filling in forms is difficult and time consuming for individuals and groups

## Opportunities

### Group Opportunities

- Helping people within the community
- Identifying and building on community strengths,
- Sustainable responses to community issues,
- Use drought as an opportunity for improving community well being,
- Developing a long term drought plan,
- Showcase strengths of Springsure to others,
- Working with Springsure Reference Group.

### Community Opportunities

- Increased access to services for all in the community,
- Access extra training for individuals and groups,
- Working collaboratively with service providers,
- Local support networks can be developed,
- Making a real difference.

## Threats

### Group Threats

- Nothing will change and group will not be sustained,
- Lack of action will affect group participations,
- Not recognised by the community as a local group,
- Doing too well (will lose services) as community is more resilient,
- Perceived barriers will prevent real action,
- Stigma associated with mental health will reduce participation.

### **Community Threats**

- Continual loss of service leads to further community stress
- Men not engaging
- Community do not always attend events and may not engage.

### **Vision Statement**

“Springsure hand in hand will develop a collaborative plan to drought proof our community”

### **Actions Identified**

The drought leadership group have identified a number of immediate actions to be implemented over the next three months as they further develop responses to the other issues identified and continue to add any additional issues.

#### **Immediate Actions**

1. Develop more local support systems such as Wheel-of-Wellbeing workshops with Centacare
2. Establish local mentor programs in partnership with CHIRRUP
3. Seek opportunities for funding for Youth Worker with a role of organising low cost activities for young people from surrounding properties and town. Also to provide support for existing youth group activities.
4. Seek information and provide letters of support for the upgrade and maintenance for access to and around the features.
5. Seek advice from CHRC whether the park based gym equipment could be spread out along the pathway to facilitate improved exercise benefits.
6. Approach CHRC around service equity in outreach areas in comparison to Emerald e.g. street sweeping, mowing of roadside and maintenance of sites for family activities e.g. Staircase
7. Obtain information about Giddy Goanna and include farm safety education at field days
8. Develop options for Community training – Wheel-of-Wellbeing and ASIST program
9. Identify and advocate for early intervention services and programs for families and their young children

## Action Table

These actions are the longer term actions from data identified in community survey

- *All these issues occur due to the effects of drought.*

Issue	Goal	Actions	By whom?	When?	Review (date/comment)
1. The impact of the economic downturn associated with drought/rural hardship on the whole community.	Build wellness and resilience of the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link with existing services and community organisations.</li> </ul>	Group members	June 2017	
2. Lack of services provision for affected businesses.	Have a plan in place to ensure that affected businesses are aware of and able to access available support and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the potential services available to consult with local businesses and identify potential services and support available.</li> <li>• Prepare resource books detailing support such as Centrelink, financial counselling options.</li> </ul>	Appointed part/time employee.	March 2017	
3. Lack of knowledge of and access to services for community members experiencing financial hardship.	Identify at-risk members of the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collate information on available support services.</li> <li>• Work with social service groups to ensure Springsure residents have access to services.</li> <li>• Work with community organisations to identify and document local needs.</li> <li>• Establish a process to share information across agencies and plan and deliver services for at-risk community members.</li> </ul>	Appointed part/time employee.	June 2017	
4. Limited employment options.	Increase in local employment options and community awareness of government funding re employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with major employers to prioritise opportunities for employment of those affected.</li> <li>• Develop local infrastructure projects than can be funded during times of drought and offer alternative employment.</li> </ul>	Group members	November 2016	

Issues	Goal	Actions	By whom?	When?	Review (date/comment)
5. Limited availability of traineeships and apprenticeships.	Increased access to apprenticeships and local training programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with employment agencies and training providers to develop options based in Springsure.</li> <li>• Liaise with major employers, local schools and local businesses to develop local apprenticeships and training programs.</li> </ul>	Group members	November 2016	
6. Support for rural residents.	Mentorship and support provided through mentor network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply for funding.</li> <li>• Recruit and train local mentors.</li> <li>• Define the mentor role.</li> <li>• Establish contacts for mentorship group.</li> <li>• Provide resources and support to rural residents through the mentorship group.</li> </ul>	Gail, Maria	June 2016	
7. Lack of clarity about available support services.	All residents and service providers are aware of support services which are fully utilised.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey and map local services.</li> <li>• Develop a local promotional resource to inform the community of available services.</li> <li>• Identify and validate existing gaps.</li> <li>• Liaise with private and public service providers available to meet service gaps.</li> <li>• Focus on integrated services, multi-disciplinary care and local access.</li> </ul>	Group members	July 2016	
8. Limited access to and local knowledge of social services, especially youth and at-risk families	Social services are accessible and well-utilised in Springsure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine capacity to provide services in Springsure.</li> <li>• Meet with potential services providers.</li> <li>• Investigate the opportunity for an integrated social services model in Springsure.</li> </ul>	Group members	September 2016	
9. Sustainability of drought leadership group.	Engagement levels maintained within Hand-in-Hand group along with a wider membership base.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain the Hand-in-Hand group.</li> <li>• Plan meetings in advance.</li> <li>• Invite wider community engagement.</li> <li>• Plan to develop the skills of the group.</li> <li>• Promote a formal structure of the group which includes a reporting mechanism to the local community and government bodies.</li> </ul>	Group members	Ongoing	