

## Drought and Women's Stories of Change

Interim progress report, December 2008



### Purpose of initiative:

To capture stories and images of women in the Wimmera region and how they experience, adapt and survive the stressful times associated with long term drought.

**Team:** Jan Hall (project manager), Melissa Powell (photographer), Tina Fitzgerald (textile artist), Janine Perry (group facilitator, DPCD) and Melba Glynn (story recorder, Triple H Community Radio).



### Description:

A series of informal discussion groups are planned to encourage women to explore their stories of change and to capture stories and images of women in the Wimmera region and how they experience, adapt and survive the stressful times associated with long term drought.

These groups will be facilitated and women will have the opportunity to capture their experiences visually, in audio form or in any manner that they feel best represents their experiences.

Key questions of the discussion will be:

- What it means to be rural women in this community at this time?
- How do rural women create and sustain wellbeing in the face of adversity?



### Milestones:

**Milestone One: Facilitated group discussion days will be conducted, commencing in July and concluding early September 2008.**

### Interim Report:

1. The original plan targeted four groups of women with approximately 10 women/group. Our intent was to seek out four groups in the most drought affected areas of the Wimmera – and women who generally don't get heard or have a voice in the public arena. The plan was to utilise a liaison woman to enable connections to an existing group of woman who met our target criteria.



### Groups held

Group 1 Woomelang with 17 women participating on 22<sup>nd</sup> July

Group 2 Nhill Drought Resource Centre Women with 8 participants on 5<sup>th</sup> August.

Group 3 Kaniva Neighbourhood House with 8 participants on the 11<sup>th</sup> November



**Milestone Two: Stories and images will be collated by the end of September.**



**Interim Report**

- In relation to point 3 above this timeline has been extended.

Following completion of the final discussion group in Kaniva, a team meeting was held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December to keep the team motivated and to bring all the material together.



- **Photography:** - Melissa has commenced undertaking photography in home environments and anticipates completing this photography in January 2009.
- **Textile art:** - Tina's wall-hangings of each group's textile art should be complete by December 19<sup>th</sup>. We plan to photograph the wall hangings, frame the photographs (A3 size) and return the framed photographs to each group prior to Christmas. As the wall hangings themselves will be exhibited, it will be at least 6 months before these are returned to the groups so a framed photo is an interim measure so the women can see and display their creative output.
- **Audio recordings:** - The recorded interviews from the first 2 groups are transcribed whilst transcription of the final group interviews are in progress.



**Milestone Three: Art work and some images and collated narratives will be returned to the groups by November.**

**Interim Report:** As per milestone two

**Milestone Four: Findings will be presented to the DPCD conference in late 2008**

**Interim Report**

As with the whole project the timeframes have been drawn outwards. Wimmera PCP and the team are considering all ideas to promote the Wimmera women's stories: audio, visual and textile art.



**In conclusion**, the project has been spread over a longer time span than originally envisaged. The reasons are related to decreased hours available for this project / week; time frame accommodation to meet the needs of various participants; and the complexity of the program with the audio recordings, photographs on the day and also later in home environments, and textile art with a number of participants completing additional squares in the weeks following their forum.

The estimated benefits for women of this project remain unchanged since inception:

These forums have provided an opportunity for rural women to talk about and record their experiences and stories of change in their communities. Wimmera PCP will use 'the stories and images of our communities' to ensure Wimmera women's stories of change are heard in a broader context. The anticipated value for women is two fold:

- having their voices heard
- providing collective data about Wimmera women's' experiences, which has the potential to inform policy.



