



RFCS future focus

March 2007 no. 11

National workshop for executive officers 21-23 March

The Office of Rural Financial Counselling will be hosting a workshop for executive officers from 21-23 March at the Edmund Barton Building, Barton, ACT. The Office has also advised state government representatives that they are welcome to attend.

The workshop will allow executive officers to exchange information about issues affecting their organisations and to discuss how they are working with the new program arrangements.

Workshop sessions will include:

- corporate governance essentials for executive officers
- financial and administrative reporting requirements
- interpreting database reports and identifying priority enhancements
- priority policy issues, and
- information on deed of grant compliance, training and outreach, monitoring and evaluation, and communications plans.

There will also be an opportunity for executive officers to deliver a short talk about their organisation and for state government representatives to discuss their expectations of service providers.

For more information about the workshop, including accommodation and travel arrangements, contact Abi Sambasivam on 02 6272 4201 (email rfcs@daff.gov.au).

Revised client service agreement and declaration

Following some feedback from rural financial counsellors and executive officers, we have revised the client service agreement and declaration form. The revised form, dated February 2007, is now available for download at www.rfcs.gov.au/admin

Assets test for homeowners – rural and rural residential areas

From 1 January 2007, if a home and adjacent land is larger than two hectares and is on one title document, the whole property may be exempt from the assets test for aged pensioners, carer payment recipients of age pension age and qualifying service pensioners.

For more information, phone the Retirement Line on 13 23 00 or visit www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/publications/rt016.htm for a copy of the factsheet.

Drought assistance for 'bigger' small businesses

The Australian Government has extended EC assistance to farm-dependent businesses employing up to 100 staff.

The new measures extend interest rate subsidies and income support to agricultural businesses employing up to 100 staff that derive at least 70% of their income directly from farmers in EC-declared areas.

For more information, visit www.daff.gov.au/droughtassist

From the ARC helpdesk

The help desk has received a number of calls from people who have not been able to log into ARC.

Firstly, make sure you are using the correct username and password.

Secondly, check the error message: it may say that your computer system has the wrong time. To fix this, double-click on the clock (on the bottom right-hand side of your screen). This brings up the **date and time properties** window. Click the **internet time** tab and then select the **update now** button. This will synchronise your computer's clock with the **time.windows.com** server on the internet. Then try to log in again.

We have received a lot of feedback from rural financial counsellors, administrative assistants and executive officers about the ARC database. We are sifting through the information and are about to start work on the major issues you've raised. Please remember: to receive updates to the database, you must be connected to the internet. Be patient! The download process can take some time, particularly if you have a dial-up connection.

For more information, phone Dean Curley on 02 6272 3549 (email rfcs@daff.gov.au).

NEWS

Drought Portal—The Drought Portal has been developed by the Council of Rural Research and Development Corporations' Chairs to allow producers to access practical tools and research results from different industries that can help them deal with drought. For more information, visit www.ruralrdc.com.au/Page/Drought+/Drought.aspx

Agriculture Portal—The Australian Government Agriculture Portal is a catalogue of Australian, state and territory government information and services for the agricultural, fisheries, processed food and forestry industries. Visit www.agriculture.gov.au for more information.

For comments about *RFCS future focus*, email rfcs@daff.gov.au

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