

MEDIA RELEASE

ANU Report: Local connections invaluable in crisis response

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The National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia today released an evaluation of its distribution of vital drought funding to thousands of farming households across the country.

National President, Claire Victory said the Australian National University's Evaluation of the Society's Implementation of the Drought Community Support Initiative provides further evidence of what works when helping people in crisis.

Overall, the report found the grant was well targeted and administered effectively.

'The urgently needed payments were taken up by over 15,000 farmers, farm workers and contractors and most was injected directly back into local communities,' Ms Victory said.

'Although the \$3,000 grant was small compared to debt levels, the assistance was welcomed and provided some peace of mind, despite a strong culture of not accepting 'hand outs' especially from a charity.

'The ongoing nature of the current drought in many parts of the country has significantly reduced the output of properties.

'Many farming households are experiencing deepened financial hardship and acknowledge it will take years to recover.

'Given these difficulties, it is not surprising that over a quarter of recipients are also experiencing significant mental health issues.

'However, recipients are proud of their communities, stating that they are resilient and watch out for and support each other.

'The evaluation used both quantitative and qualitative data from the people who were assisted and from the Society's members, volunteers and staff who provided that support.

'The findings also point to the benefits of engaging services and people who are well connected to, and understand the needs of, local communities to distribute assistance.

'The Society's members, volunteers and staff provided significant additional financial support from the Society's reserves to just over half of recipients and referrals to local support services such as financial counsellors,' Ms Victory said.

The ANU Report is available [here](#).

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia consists of 60,000 members and volunteers who operate on the ground through over 1,000 groups located in local communities across the country.

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