

MEDIA RELEASE

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CIRCLE OF HOPE – SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE SUFFERING DUE TO THE DROUGHT

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The environmental, economic and social consequences of the drought are affecting most members of the Echuca/Moama rural community. Its impact reaches all of us, from the kids at school who live with mum and dad's worry and stresses to people who enjoy their gardening which has been curbed by the worry of water restrictions. Not to mention a shared empathy for those people who rely on water for their livelihood.

Echuca Regional Health has recently employed a Drought Support Worker through funding allocated to the Campaspe Primary Care Partnership from the Victorian Government. Ruth Turpin commenced with ERH in May this year and has been working with people experiencing hardship as a direct result of the drought. "Many people I have come in contact with are really struggling and this includes small businesses as well as farmers. Some business owners are finding it difficult keep staff employed and are often providing support to farmers having difficulty to pay bills. Some people are relying on the EC funding just to get by each week" said Mrs Turpin.

Mrs Turpin has discovered many local communities have found support and comfort by participating in community events and has planned a gathering that will be based in Echuca. People experiencing hardship and loss of their way of life as a result of the drought are invited to share in joining hands to form a Circle of Hope followed by a community BBQ breakfast at Alton Reserve in the center of town on Saturday 14 July at 9 am.

The focus will be on what we have to be grateful for, encouraging the rain to continue to fall and writing messages of hope to be displayed in a large spiral of flags. Local stories will be shared, tales told and access to Drought workers and information on support services will be available. The morning will culminate in the joining of hands to form the largest circle possible; a Circle of Hope. Local school children's banners of hope will be included with what will be written on the day. People are invited to share in a BBQ breakfast following the Circle of Hope and then head into the weekend with a feeling of well being and shared empathy. The event is being supported by Campaspe Shire, Simplot, Murray Goulburn and the Lions Club of Echuca.

Photo opportunity of flags prepared and children prior to even as well as the ceremony.