



## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT





“

She spoke in a language we could understand and was able to answer any questions we had.

CLIENT | RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE PROGRAM



## CONTENTS

<b>5</b>	Chair Report
<b>6</b>	Interim Executive Officer Report
<b>9</b>	Our People
<b>10</b>	Strategic Objective Outcomes
<b>12</b>	Rural Financial Counselling Service Program
<b>16</b>	Regional Small Business Support Program
<b>21</b>	Grants and Marketing
<b>23</b>	Financials

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to show our respect to the traditional custodians of this land on which we work and meet. We also acknowledge and respect Elders past, present and emerging.

The Rural Financial Counselling Service program is funded by the Australian Government and the New South Wales Government and is administered by the National Emergency Management Agency.





From my view, the super wet times we have had after the drought have been more stressful and much more difficult than even the hard times in the drought.

CLIENT | RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE PROGRAM

Board Member	29/07/2022	23/09/2022	25/11/2022	02/02/2023	03/02/2023	31/03/2023	26/05/2023	Eligible	Attended
Anita Kemp	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NR	6	6
David Needham	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7	7
Laureta Wallace	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7	7
Fiona Jolly	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7	7
John McArthur	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7	7
Diana Fear	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	7	6
Michael Kemp	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	7	5

## CHAIR REPORT

### DAVID NEEDHAM (VICE CHAIR)

2023 has been a year of extremes that has seen our clients continuously challenged by natural hazards that included devastating widespread flooding followed by bushfires for some clients, the emergence of new biosecurity risks and economic conditions that included 10 increases to the cash rate totalling 3.25%. Throughout these challenges, Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) NSW has remained steadfast in its pursuit to strengthen communities by helping rural and regional businesses and individuals be prepared, responsive and sustainable. Prolonged flooding in the 2022-23 financial year put immense pressure on agricultural operations requiring significant recovery efforts from already stretched resources. We are grateful for the confidence the Australian Government and NSW Government have placed in us to deliver this vital support and acknowledge the tireless work of the entire RFCS NSW team.

#### Financial position

Despite a slight decrease in year over year revenue from \$6.5m in FY21-22 to \$6.4m in FY22-23, the organisation remains in a strong financial position:

- Equity \$2,826,890
- Revenue \$6,352,727

The RFCS core program funding balance is in surplus at \$138k this year vs. \$253k last financial year. In the coming financial year this surplus will be directed towards achieving our strategic priorities of efficient and effective client services across NSW, investing in our people, their

capability and improving our organisational systems. We will prioritise the additional investment in counsellors and corporate support staff based on demand factors such as client numbers by region and the continued demand for flood recovery support and other emerging risks.

#### Constitutional change

Company members met during the year and resolved to broaden the purpose of the organisation to the provision of financial counselling services not only to farming businesses, and small businesses in rural and regional communities, but also to individuals and families who may find themselves in financial distress.

#### Organisational change

The Board would like to acknowledge the invaluable contribution made by David Galloway during his four and a half years as Executive Officer. This included the growth of the service into new areas including the addition of the NSW Central Region for the RFCS Program and generalist financial counselling in the Illawarra region. The process of recruiting a new Executive Officer is currently underway, and to maintain organisational momentum and stability during this transition period, the Board appointed Anita Kemp to act as Interim Executive Officer.

#### Looking ahead

RFCS NSW is well positioned to deliver the RFCS program for the next program period and continues to provide support to individuals, farmers and small business owners as they navigate a challenging and changing environment. We look forward to working with the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry who assumed administrative responsibility of the RFCS program on 1 July 2023.



ANITA KEMP | DAVID NEEDHAM | LAURETA WALLACE | FIONA JOLLY | JOHN McARTHUR | DIANA FEAR | MICHAEL KEMP  
RFCS NSW BOARD





# INTERIM EXECUTIVE OFFICER REPORT

ANITA KEMP

During the 2022-23 financial year, our clients and staff grappled with the compounding impacts of bushfires, COVID-19 and a third consecutive La Niña event that delivered record rainfall and flooding to widespread areas across NSW. The resulting increase in farmers and small business owners experiencing financial hardship and distress was evidenced by the 720 flood impacted clients that sought the support of RFCS NSW.

## Emergency response framework

To help manage unprecedented demand we developed an emergency response framework which mapped our role in responding to the flood emergency to the seven phases in the Australian Government's National Disaster Management and Recovery continuum. This process enhanced our ability to provide efficient and effective support to those in need by appropriately triaging client demand as the flooding emergency developed.

## State and national stakeholders

During the year RFCS NSW worked closely with key stakeholders at both a state and national level. At a state level we continued a referral arrangement with NSW Rural Assistance Authority which integrates into applications the ability for its customers to request contact by a rural financial counsellor. We also provided assistance to the NSW Department of Primary Industries in their emergency response to Varroa Mite and to both RAA and DPI in response to the widespread flooding in our region.

At a national level we liaised with Treasury and Financial Counselling Australia to respond to a consultation on licensing exemptions for financial product and credit advice for rural and small business financial counsellors.

## Program changes

The pilot Regional Small Business Support (RSBS) program ended on 30 June 2023. Established in January 2020, the program was delivered through RFCS NSW and provided free financial counselling to small regional businesses experiencing financial hardship due to drought, 2019-20 bushfires, COVID-19 and flooding events in 2022 and 2023.

Since the program commenced, RFCS NSW has assisted more than 500 clients from 61 local government areas. To continue this important work, the Board has approved the appointment of one small business counsellor for one year commencing 1 July 2023 and continues to advocate for a similar program to be funded.

## New services

RFCS NSW is now extending service provision to include personal financial counselling, having successfully applied for funding to supply services to the Illawarra region. The region covers Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama and Shoalhaven, and offices will be located in Wollongong and Nowra. Staff have been recruited ready for service commencement on 1 July 2023.

In 2022, a Business Development unit was established to diversify funding sources and provide additional support to our financial counsellors. Funding secured through the successful application of this year's grant strategy allowed for the delivery of a coaching development program and numerous projects that supported existing outreach initiatives and gave clients access to experts in agriculture, banking, risk management, technology and marketing.

## Risk management

The Company's Risk Management Policy is reviewed annually with identified risks reviewed at each Board meeting. During the 2022-23 financial year, the following key risks were monitored:

- We have responded to increased risk associated with data breaches and system failure by providing cyber awareness training for all staff, establishing phishing training through our IT provider and engaging a cyber security expert to review our systems and identify data management improvement opportunities.

- New business risks emerging from diversifying funding sources and the delivery of new grant programs that help achieve the Company's vision of *NSW being a network of thriving rural and regional communities*.
- Staff turnover and key personnel loss driven by the conclusion of the RSBS program, entering the final year of the RFCS program funding agreement and the resignation of our Executive Officer, David Galloway in March 2023.

We continue to address key risks identified in our 2022 financial year annual report, including:

- Working with Treasury, our funding bodies and Financial Counselling Australia regarding licensing exemptions for our staff and to understand the implications for the provision of advice in key areas of service delivery.
- Development of competency frameworks and improved learning and development capabilities to address the risks associated with client servicing.

Work is progressing with the Financial Counselling Association of NSW (FCAN) to meet FCAN's membership and accreditation processes. While this progresses, we have adopted all aspects of the FCAN and National Standards for membership and accreditation, and supervision during the past year.

## Corporate services

To manage the emerging risks of the 2022-23 financial year, Corporate Services will commence the new financial year with a focus on:

- New Learning Management System
- Cyber security review
- A transition to Bendigo Bank
- Budget restructuring by Team Leader

## Program outcomes

Details of the outcomes achieved through the delivery of the RFCS program and RSBS program are highlighted on the following pages.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the team of RFCS NSW staff who have worked tirelessly throughout the year to connect with and support the regional and rural communities of NSW.





## On the ground in Eugowra NSW, 14 November 2022

RFCS NSW was on the ground helping the people of Eugowra recover from the devastation caused by unprecedented flash flooding on 14 November 2022. Our Small Business Counsellor and Rural Financial Counsellor were regulars at the Service NSW Flood Recovery tents to assist flood victims access help in the form of grants and disaster assistance. Rotary gift vouchers valued at \$500 were also handed out to those in need.

Many flood affected businesses have had to accrue debt in order to recover.

Our counsellor is now supporting these businesses to re-negotiate loans or access Rural Assistance Authority (RAA) disaster relief low interest loans that require no repayments for 12 months. Recovery continues and RFCS NSW will maintain its support to small business owners in Eugowra through the continued self-funding of one Small Business Financial Counsellor.

Eugowra is just one example of the many flood-impacted towns within our footprint requiring extensive and ongoing support.

**Photo** taken by client on rooftop of Jamace Graphic Design, Eugowra while awaiting airlift rescue

## OUR PEOPLE

**RFCS NSW Interim Executive Officer** | Anita Kemp

### LEADERSHIP TEAM

Kyle Shook  
Brad Ristivojevic  
Emma Smithson  
Brett Dodson  
Liz Brown  
Arran Curll  
Prue Hulm  
Susan Kelley

CORPORATE SERVICES MANAGER  
RISK & COMPLIANCE MANAGER  
HR MANAGER  
RSBS PROGRAM MANAGER - REWiRE  
RFCS COUNSELLOR TEAM LEADER EASTERN  
RFCS COUNSELLOR TEAM LEADER COASTAL  
RFCS COUNSELLOR TEAM LEADER RIVERINA  
RFCS COUNSELLOR TEAM LEADER WESTERN

### CORPORATE SUPPORT STAFF

Alison Cooper  
Renee Goring  
Elise Hawthorn  
Krista Scannell  
Kay Thompson

BUSINESS SUPPORT OFFICER  
PROJECT OFFICER  
COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER  
CORPORATE SERVICES OFFICER  
GRANTS & PROJECT OFFICER

### FINANCIAL COUNSELLORS

Robyn d'Argent  
Clare Boardman  
Sue Bunyan  
Julie Casey  
Peta Comitti  
Kerry Connor  
Olivia Coulahan  
Danielle Davenport  
Allison Davis  
Nikki Fletcher  
Tony Flett  
Tammy Galvin  
Craig Halden  
Vicki Hall  
Bonnie Hayes  
Kate Justin  
Jess Keemink  
Justin Luckel  
Cathy McLinden  
Marine Morton  
Marianne Simpson  
Graeme Witte

### SENIOR FINANCIAL COUNSELLORS

John Beer  
Vic Boag  
Elke Cleverdon  
Linda McLean  
Peter Muirhead  
Dave Waters

### SMALL BUSINESS COUNSELLORS

Flick Hamilton  
Brittany Lando  
Geoff Lisle  
Jodie McMillan  
Glen Stewart

### BUSINESS ANALYSTS

Rhianna Cameron  
Kelly Churchill  
Jade McGovern  
Anke Rudolph  
Rebecca White



# 2022-2023

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE OUTCOMES

### 1. DIVERSIFY FUNDING



Strengthen the sustainability of the organisation through diversity of funding

**\$1,813,084**

value of grants awarded

**15** grants won

**81%** of total value applied for

### 2. CLIENT SERVICE



Provide efficient and effective financial counselling services around NSW

**1729**

clients assisted

**720**

flood impacted clients supported

**8294**

counselling sessions

**9206**

contacts in database

### 3. SUPPORT BUSINESS OWNERS



Support business owners in financial hardship to build their resilience and recovery

**512**

small businesses assisted through REWIRE program

**35%**

were unable to meet business expenses

**86%**

were experiencing a decrease in sales

### 4. LOCAL COMMUNITIES



Engage and work with our local communities to build strong and dynamic communities

across **61** LGAs and **624,897** km<sup>2</sup>

**22**

workshops hosted

**508**

outreach events attended

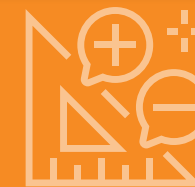
**2014**

networks added into our CRM

**56**

new client leads per week

### 5. GOVERNANCE



To continue to be a respected and well governed charity

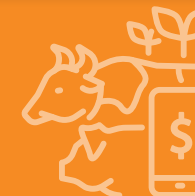
**59**

organisational risks identified and managed

**6**

work health and safety consultations completed

### 6. FINANCIAL COUNSELLING



Build our standing and influence within the Financial Counselling Industry

**46**

FCAN members at 30/6/23



responded to Treasury's consultation on the 'Rationalisation of Ending ASIC Instrument Measures'

### 7. PROFESSIONALISM



Build a team of highly effective, qualified, professional staff embedded in their local community

**33**

financial counsellors

**78%**

of our workforce is female

**677**

hours of CPD training

**88%**

eligible staff completed or working towards Diploma in Financial Counselling

**424**

hours of supervision

**99%**

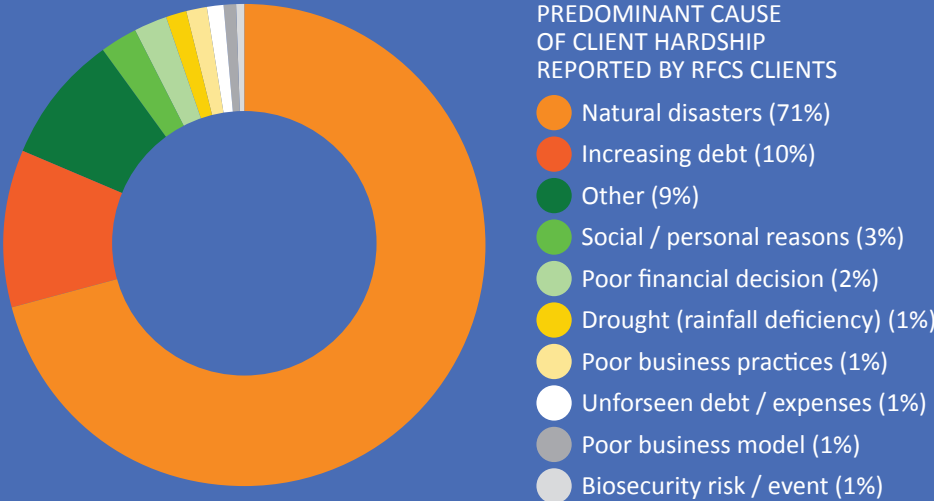
positive client satisfaction rating



# RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE PROGRAM

RFCS NSW has been delivering financial counselling services for over 15 years and has mature systems and processes to support quality service delivery. The program exists to:

- 1. Transition clients out of financial crisis
- 2. Improve profitability or facilitate a dignified exit
- 3. Improve financial wellbeing and resilience



## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### RFCS PROGRAM

The 2022-23 financial year was a challenging one for primary producers, rural communities and RFCS frontline staff across the Southern and Central regions of NSW and commenced with a wide area already under flood disaster declaration. Further flooding in September and then November resulted in catastrophic flooding across a vast region including Molong, Canowindra, Cowra and Eugowra that impacted towns further downstream and left much of the service area under flood disaster declaration.

Digital communication was used to reach communities isolated by floodwaters including Hay, Hillston, Deniliquin and Condobolin and our Business Analysts responded to hundreds of calls for assistance through our 1800 phone line. When roads opened up, Rural Financial Counsellors were on site at local recovery centres providing support to primary producers. Following an assessment of each client’s immediate needs, Counsellors supported clients to address recovery issues relating to grant assistance, cashflow planning, creditor negotiations and long-term business planning.

The floods were followed by bushfires in February and March 2023 that had a devastating impact on the Central Tablelands and then the Central West, Western and North West areas of the service region.

Through these persistently challenging times, our Counsellors continued to focus on the RFCS program objectives and used a case management approach to provide confidential, unbiased and independent financial counselling to clients.

Flood assistance demand peaked in June 2023 when our Counsellors delivered 1,117 counselling sessions (up from an average of 737). In addition to the hundreds of calls per week to the 1800

number, counselling sessions for the 2022-23 financial year totalled 8294, active clients numbered 1729 and client contacts in our system reached 9206 suggesting high and ongoing demand for our services.

Demand for business reviews grew significantly towards the end of the financial year as interest rates and input prices climbed and stock prices fell, negatively impacting working capital availability. Cashflow has been further compromised by a lack of income from crop losses in 2022, and the cleanup and reestablishment costs associated with floods and bushfires.

Throughout the year, service delivery has been informed by our Farming and Small Business Philosophy reflecting our belief that to have a successful, financially self-sufficient business there needs to be alignment between:

- the business
- the business owner
- the family
- the business support network.

Our philosophy promotes a holistic approach by understanding our clients’ circumstances in each of these domains, recognising what it means to be successful, and identifying how we can support clients to achieve success through building competencies and developing good network relationships. Importantly, this philosophy reflects our belief that business planning is key to success.



# RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE PROGRAM

“

Succession and retirement are complex and difficult issues. We got good help getting the process started ... got referred to reputable legal resources. We are well underway to having our succession sorted.

CLIENT | RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE PROGRAM

1729  
clients supported

4.9/5  
average client satisfaction rating

8294  
counselling sessions

## CASE STUDIES RFCS PROGRAM

### Planning for success

**When clients from a significant dorper sheep operation first made contact with RFCS NSW, they enquired about eligibility for an RAA Drought Assistance Fund loan. Due to the recent implementation of a succession plan, low primary production income and the wife's off-farm income, no drought assistance was available. While this disheartened the young couple, the Rural Financial Counsellor (RFC) kept the line of communication open.**

Despite the commercial scale of the enterprise, there had been minimal planning regarding its capacity to service the debt taken on as a result of the succession arrangements. The high level of debt combined with the effects of drought resulted in cashflow pressures on the business, prompting the couple to re-engage with RFCS NSW.

The couple initially identified increasing their overdraft to resolve their cashflow difficulties. Rather than focusing on borrowed capital as the solution, the RFC worked with the clients to look at the whole business. The Business Review Tool (BRT) helped refocus the client's attention to turnover and cashflow rather than genetics and stock management. Testing cashflow assumptions through multiple scenarios allowed the RFC to highlight funding gaps or seasonal financial shortages. This enabled the clients to proactively manage cashflow and their overdraft throughout the year to avoid shortfalls.

Next they focused on monthly cashflow reviews and actual vs budget variances. As the client's financial literacy skills improved they set medium and long term strategic goals. Profitability of the farming operation improved and as their primary production income exceeded off-farm income they became eligible for RAA assistance. This has enabled the client to receive assistance and recover from recent flooding.

### Building resilience

**Lacking the confidence to deal with his Bank Manager, our client sought the assistance of RFCS NSW in 2019 to support his negotiations. Balancing substantial borrowings through a livestock finance facility along with a significant mortgage, our client sought to navigate an agreement with their bank, opting to sell cattle instead of land to fulfill his commitments.**

A team of RFCs and Business Analysts worked with the client to provide a detailed map of the client's business and the optimum plan moving forward. They also assisted the client to present this plan to the bank resulting in a successful outcome at a time critical to their business. The client was able to reach an agreement with the bank that allowed them to sell cattle instead of land to fulfil their commitments. This allowed the client to avoid farm debt mediation whilst taking advantage of the high point in the cattle market.

Then came the floods in late 2022. With his property inundated, the client's immediate need was to access a flood grant to fund the movement of his cattle to safer ground. In addition, the grant enabled the client to repair the flood damaged fences, roads and infrastructure.

In the wake of a sharp decline in stock prices, the RFC supported the client to review stock numbers, develop a sales schedule and focus on a long-term debt recovery strategy that would enable him to slowly wind down the business and transition into semi-retirement. The RFC also focused on the client's technology skills to ensure they were equipped to input online invoice claims and prepare cashflow budgets for the bank in preparation for bank reviews.

Following the implementation of the plan the client's debt levels have reduced and profit margins increased. The client now has improved capability to cashflow budget and develop longer term operational goals through production planning that considers the impact on cashflow. The client is more confident in supplying information to the bank and is benefiting from the ability to discuss plans, business financing needs and performance.



# REGIONAL SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAM - REWiRE

Rural Financial Counselling Service NSW has delivered the pilot Regional Small Business Support program for the last 3.5 years with funding provided by the Australian Government. Funding for this program ceased at 30 June 2023.

## TIME IN CURRENT HARDSHIP REPORTED BY REWiRE CLIENTS

- < 6 months (19%)
- 6-12 months (26%)
- 1-2 years (32%)
- >2 years (23%)



## PREDOMINANT CAUSE OF CLIENT HARDSHIP REPORTED BY REWiRE CLIENTS

- COVID-19 (57%)
- Drought (17%)
- Bushfire (16%)
- Flood (11%)



# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

## REWiRE

The RSBS program successfully assisted 329 clients in Southern Region and 183 in Central Region from April 2020 to 30 June 2023 across 61 local government areas. The program’s primary goal was to help regional and rural businesses succeed through the provision of unbiased and independent financial counselling.

Through this program, we strengthened communities by helping businesses that were experiencing, or at risk of, financial hardship to be prepared, responsive and sustainable through the provision of free, independent and confidential financial counselling. We provided clients with the tools, knowledge, and referrals to enable them to regain financial independence and support their mental health and wellbeing.

The last 3.5 years have presented small business owners with arguably one of the most challenging periods in modern history. The impact of bushfires, followed by COVID-19, catastrophic floods, rising interest rates, labour shortages and steady increases to the overall cost of living have had, and continue to have, a devastating impact on the small business landscape.

Whilst there was no typical client, many of our clients shared similar characteristics:

- 35% reported they were unable to meet their business expenses when entering the program
- 86% had seen a decrease in sales and 62% had been experiencing increased input costs
- 69% did not have a business plan and a further 19% did not have an updated business plan
- 55% of clients had been experiencing financial hardship for 12 months or more
- 22% of our clients operated retail and 20% accommodation and food service businesses.

To recover, clients have sought assistance with business planning (86%), improving their financial management skills (83%), and improving profitability (85%).

The Professional Services Fund gave clients access to specialist third party advice when the inability to afford specialist advice was a barrier to recovery, or to resolve an issue identified through the case management process. Funds totalling \$858,891 were accessed by clients for:

Marketing and Communications	61%
Training / Study	12%
Financial advice	11%
Business Planning	9%
ICT Consulting	3%
Other	4%

The program has helped business owners improve their business acumen, identify better processes and procedures, access and utilise technology and connect with industry specialists. In addition, the Professional Services Fund has enabled training or development of marketing and digital platforms that strengthen long term viability and ultimately help keep locals employed in regional communities.

Our counsellors helped small business owners navigate tough times by providing advice and guidance on their financial position, helping them identify goals and to develop and implement a business plan. Practically this includes:

- Identifying underlying issues
- Developing cash flows and budgets
- Creating business and risk management plans
- Accessing government assistance
- Managing relationships with creditors and lenders.

Crucially these outcomes have often been achieved for clients without the financial capacity to access fee for service support. Without the engagement of our program, many of these underlying business issues would remain unaddressed, contributing to cases of ongoing hardship, business failure and increased stressors on the business owner’s mental wellbeing.



# REGIONAL SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAM - REWiRE



The counsellor was great. She helped us improve our financial situation and helped us understand our break-even points. From that we've adjusted our pricing to improve our profits.

CLIENT | REGIONAL SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAM

## CASE STUDY REWiRE

### Transforming a struggling café through diversification and succession planning

**When the owner of a café reached out to the RFCS NSW Regional Small Business Support program, she was concerned that the aftermath of COVID-19, floods, a traffic incident that closed the local bridge and poor health would force her business to close. An initial review of the business revealed poor gross margins and declining revenue.**

The Small Business Counsellor conducted a thorough review, analysing financials, operations, and market conditions. The findings revealed that relying solely on the café's traditional revenue stream was unsustainable and the owner's health concerns threatened business continuity.

Through a series of three brainstorming sessions, the owner and Small Business Counsellor identified a diversification model that resulted in the owner leasing the neighbouring premises to open a general merchandise store with an online shop to tap into the growing online market. In addition, a pricing analysis resulted in a review of menu prices to account for increasing input costs.

Recognising the importance of business continuity and the owner's well-being, the Small Business Counsellor also helped establish a management succession plan. The owner's daughter was appointed as a trainee manager, receiving mentoring to take on managerial responsibilities, enabling the owner to take multiple days off without disruptions.

Through strategic diversification and a management succession plan, the café is successfully adapting to challenges. Opening a general merchandise store and embracing the online market expanded revenue streams, ensuring long-term sustainability. With a management structure in place, the café has a brighter future and the owner enjoys renewed confidence.





“

The presenter was very engaging and I appreciated a smaller group to work through specific examples and personal circumstances. It's a shame more farmers don't attend things like this to benefit.

PARTICIPANT | RISK MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

## GRANTS AND MARKETING

### FUNDING DIVERSIFICATION

#### Grant strategy

With a focus on funding diversification, the application of our grant strategy in the 2022-23 financial year resulted in 15 successful grant applications that yielded an additional \$1,813,084 in funding in this and following years.

Workshops were run throughout the year with funding received from Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network, Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network, Rotary funds, and the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal. Fourteen workshops held in six regional NSW locations focused on:

- Understanding Basic Finances and Risks
- Rural Economic Conditions
- Decision Making and Mental health
- Recording Keeping Tips for Small Businesses
- Strengthening You and Your Finances
- Recovery and Resilience
- Counsellor Coaching and Mentoring
- Rebuilding your Business through Social Media and Financial Skills

In addition, eight risk management workshops were delivered through the Disaster Risk Reduction funding that is jointly funded by the Australian and NSW governments. These were held in Wagga Wagga, Wentworth, Balranald, Moama, Bathurst, Molong, Forbes and Grenfell. Another nine workshops are planned for the remainder of 2023. The promotion of workshops has necessitated the growth of our marketing outreach.

#### New website

The start of 2023 saw the unveiling of a year-long project to upgrade the RFCS NSW website. This strategic endeavour aimed to better service the needs of primary producers and provide a seamless and informative user experience. The site reflects our commitment to providing rural and regional communities with an enriching online experience backed by content from trusted

knowledge sources, and has yielded a 25,923 increase in page views from last financial year.

#### Increased engagement/reach

The reach growth of 209,353 on our social media channels was consistent with our 2022-23 FY goal to increase engagement through the creation of a vibrant online community. This was achieved by maintaining a consistent posting schedule on key social platforms to drive program awareness and share information from key stakeholder groups.

Additionally, communication with clients and key stakeholders was sustained through our monthly and special edition newsletters with information regarding programs, supports, grants, topical issues, local events and RFCS NSW workshops.

#### Natural disaster and biosecurity support

During the floods, local communities were turning to RFCS NSW as a trusted source for information on flood grants, disaster declarations and flood support. This was evidenced by an uptake in followers (141) and an increase in engagement (65%) on RFCS NSW's main social media channel, Facebook, and an increase in outbound emails to clients (18,832) and emails opened (20,966) from October to November 2022. The provision of weekly statistics and updates during this time strengthened relationships, increased program awareness and facilitated the effective use of resources in our region.

Biosecurity threats were also a feature of the 2022-23 FY and included Varroa Mite, Japanese Encephalitis and Foot-and-Mouth Disease. Through our partnerships with Local Lands Services, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Department of Regional NSW, RFCS NSW Northern Region and local councils we were able to keep primary producers and small business owners informed and supported.

people reached on our  
social media channels

282,683



43,532

website page  
visits



14,467

website  
users



175,508

outbound emails  
delivered





“

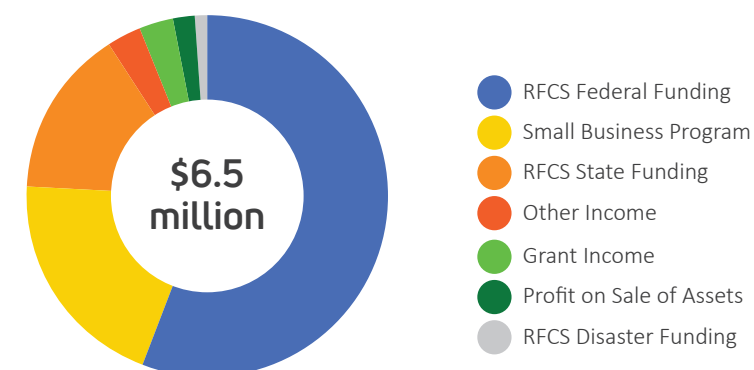
I am a solo farmer in remote country, and have faced natural disaster and the financial issues and personal hardships that go with that. My counsellors have been so much help to me and I am very grateful.

CLIENT | RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE PROGRAM

## FINANCIALS

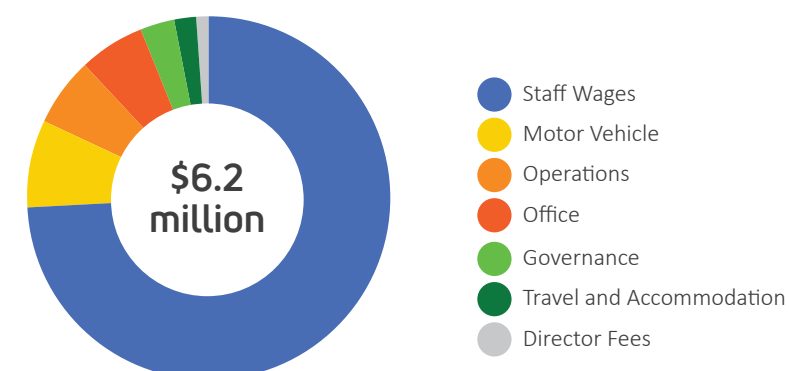
### REVENUE BY TYPE

In this financial year, RFCS program funding from the Federal government has been a significant contributor, accounting for \$3.6 million or 56% of our total revenue. The Regional Small Business Support program, which concluded on 30 June 2023, contributed \$1.3 million, representing 20% of our revenue. NSW state funding returned this year, contributing \$1 million and accounting for 15% of our total revenue. This funding was not received during the previous financial year (2021-2022). Additionally, this financial year has seen the introduction of a new revenue stream from grant income, generating \$175,000 throughout the year. We remain committed to exploring further opportunities to enhance and sustain our revenue streams in the future.



### EXPENSES BY TYPE

Staff wages accounted for the largest portion of total expenses, representing 75% of the total expenses and amounting to \$4.7 million. The combined costs of motor vehicles, operational expenses and office costs constituted 20% of expenses, totaling \$1.2 million. There was a year over year reduction in total expenses, with a notable decrease of \$256,000. This was primarily driven by a reduction in staff wages, contributing \$141,000 to the overall expense decrease.



RFCS NSW is a registered charitable organisation with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission and is endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient.



Visit [www.acnc.gov.au](http://www.acnc.gov.au) to search for our registration, full financial statements, charity status and details or scan the QR code for direct access.



