

Club joins with City of Boroondara to help our farmers. Desperate situation calls for prompt action.

The Rotary Club of Camberwell has responded quickly to a request from the Mayor of Boroondara, Councillor Phillip Healey to join with him to “do something” about the plight of our farmers.

Led by Warwick Heil, the first stage of what promises to be a significant hands on project for our Club has been approved by the Community Services Committee and is quickly moving into action.

A tragedy of historic dimensions is unfolding throughout the Victorian and Australian country side. Simply, long drought – lack of water– has led already extended farmers into heavy debt, desperation, depression and, at the extreme, suicide.

In the words of Mayor Healey, “City people don’t understand the dimensions of the problems facing our farmers and country businesses who depend on them. Many of us think that we are suffering because we can’t freely water our gardens. Yet our country neighbours are living through the greatest collapse in social capital in living memory.”

The challenge posed by Councillor Healey and taken up by our Club is based upon the notion of a partnership between metropolitan cities, their mayors and the Rotary Clubs within their boundaries.

These potentially powerful teams would then seek to “adopt” country cities or shires with the aim of providing support and some services for their communities. In the adopted shires, similar coalitions of shire, Rotary Clubs and other interested community groups would provide the linkages between the city and the country.

The Boroondara partnership, initially between the Rotary Club of Camberwell and the City, would soon seek to expand to include all Rotary Clubs within the boundaries of the city.

The Shire of Moira in the Murray valley is known to be in great need of support and has been ‘adopted’ for the initial pilot exercise program for the Boroondara team. On Friday 5th. October, an initial steering team comprised of Warwick Heil, Don Jago, Peter Allen and Phillip Healey visited Cobram in the Shire of Moira to meet with the Mayor, Frank Malcolm, Councillors, Rotary Clubs and

community representatives to investigate the needs and possibilities of the proposed program. The meeting was timely and the proposals for support were greeted enthusiastically by the Moira people.

The challenges facing Moira and other shires are simply over-

has no feed for his dairy herd. To keep his herd alive ‘until it rains’ he borrows \$250,000 to feed his cows for a single season. If the rain does not come soon, he will be finished as a farmer.

Of course the business dimension is but a small part of the country tragedy. There is little money for food, none for entertainment and no time for relaxation. There are health and relationship problems rising alarmingly. Holidays and treats for children are not possible.

What can we do?

The financial needs of country communities are vast and beyond the abilities and

Moira has begun. Already we are “getting some rubber on the road”. The Rotary Club of Camberwell will support and participate in a community gathering in the Moira Shire on Wednesday 31 October. While details remain to be finalised over the next few days, this much is known -

The event, will take the form of a community family barbecue. This will be organised by local Rotary Clubs. It will be mounted in the evening at a sports ground. Estimates of attendance range from a few hundreds to more than a thousand persons.

The timing of the event on a Wednesday evening was made to suit the needs of the local community.

Twenty or more Rotarians from Camberwell and other Boroondara Clubs will travel by bus to participate in the barbecue. Our partners will of course be most welcome to participate. We will leave Melbourne in the middle of the day and return after mid-night on Thursday rather than involve our participants in accommodation costs and the Club in larger bus hire charges.

This event, while it is an opportunity for fellowship for our members is specifically a community service event. It is mounted with a larger end in mind. We aim to spend time with community members to demonstrate that we care about their plight, to reinforce contacts between Boroondara and Moira and to learn about what we can do to lighten the load being suffered by families.

Already, several ideas have been floated for examination. These include visits to Boroondara by farmers and their families, hosted by Rotarians and other citizens. Rotary camp resources and RYLA might be invited to participate in delivering holidays and experiences for country children.

We aim to demonstrate that “Boroondara Cares”, Melbourne Cares and Australia Cares. Our Club has a clear opportunity for service and that is what Rotary is all about.



Our team “on the ground” in Cobram. Warwick Heil, PDG Don Jago, Phillip Healey and Peter Allen (camera) stretch their legs before their meeting with the Moira team.

whelming. The stories told are sobering, emotional and frankly draining.

Consider this story as one example of a great number. A traditionally successful dairy farmer, after years of drought is already financially over extended. His annual income is around fifty thousand dollars. He

resources of Rotary Clubs and Municipalities. There are however many areas where community resources can achieve much. These begin very simply by showing that we , in the city, begin to understand and demonstrate some consideration and care.

A process of consultation with

