

Drought and climate adaptation program

Perceptions of drought risk in Queensland grazing *Insights from DCAP social scientific research*

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Who am I?

- Senior Social Scientist at Queensland Department of Environment and Science
- Working on Qld Department Agriculture and Fisheries' Drought and Climate Adaption Program (DCAP2)
- *DES3: Enabling drought resilience and adaptation in Qld grazing: A program of social research and knowledge adoption*

Drought preparedness

A form of adaptive capacity that can help build the resilience of the grazing industry in the face of a variable climate

Requires:

- Adoption of specific preparation practices and skills
- Meeting certain material, economic and infrastructural conditions
- Adoption of a particular 'mindset' or attitude including:
 - A rational and strategic business approach with a drive to improve profitability
 - An ability to understand and manage drought as a business risk
 - Skills in application of scientific information and knowledge, and participation in cohesive social networks inc. family, community and industry.
 - A tolerance of change and uncertainty



Social research aim:

Exploring the cultural factors that complicate and constrain the 'drought preparedness' mindset

Methods:

1. Comparative discourse analysis
 - Media and government policy framings of drought and Qld grazing
2. 'Kitchen table' interviews with grazing families
 - Values, goals and information use
 - How drought and 'drought preparation' is understood
 - How drought risk is assessed
 - Government's role in drought preparedness.

Report: Paxton, G. (2019) *'Towards greater drought preparedness in Queensland grazing: Lessons from qualitative interviews and discourse analysis'* Qld Dept of Environment and Science

5 'cultural and social' things that may complicate graziers' adoption of a drought preparedness mindset....

1. Competing cultural 'stories' told about drought

	Managing a business risk frame	Battling adversity frame
<i>Drought is...</i>	One of many business risks facing graziers	A natural event creating profound difficulty for rural lives
<i>Graziers are...</i>	Professionals using rational and strategic planning and decision making	Battlers using fortification, fighting, enduring or gambling skills
<i>Support found in...</i>	Knowledge, scientific expertise and information	Rallying communities, charities and sympathetic politicians
<i>Solution is...</i>	No 'solution' - ongoing business risk and an individual responsibility	Rain (a cause for celebration)

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"NO RAIN, MORE HEARTBREAK"

The family were **forced to destock** seven or eight years ago due to dry conditions but slowly returned to the beef game only to be faced with another drought.

"From Warrnambool to Winton, from Coonamble to Ceduna, farmers are hurting, hostage to the weather and market forces".

IT'S DAM TOUGH BUT BLACKALL **BATTLERS** AREN'T BEAT

“Before last month's rains, Longreach had suffered **Mother Nature's cruellest punishment**, a drought lasting more than two years.

Drought adjectives, verbs and adverbs



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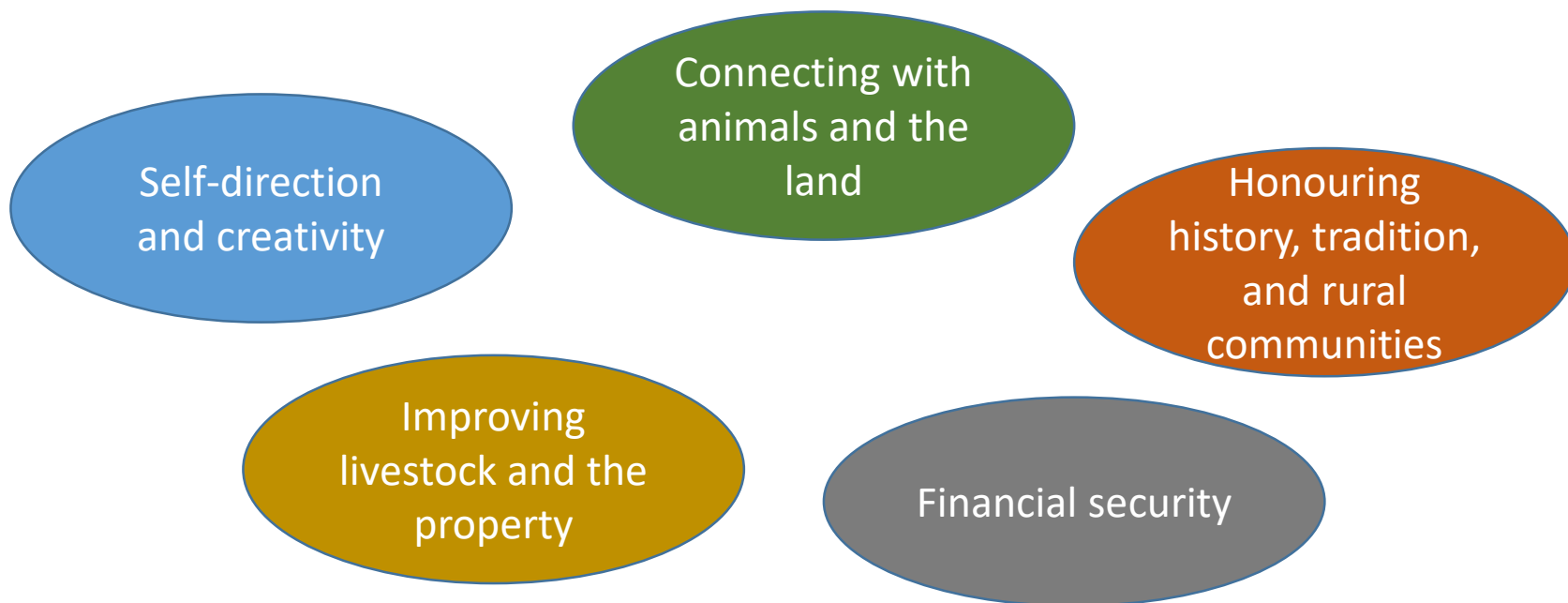
*Droughts are part of life for rural Australians; they can occur anywhere at any time. Primary producers should know how to prepare and cope with drought. **Queensland government website.***

"We have to be **really good businessmen** if we want to succeed out here," [grazier] said. "There's no chance for mugs or anything like that, we've got to **do a proper job.**" **ABC Rural**

Farmers interested in
'science and fact and
evidence' **ABC Rural**

*Innovative research will be converted into information systems and processes to support Queensland graziers to manage drought and climate challenges more effectively. **Queensland government website.***

2. Multiple values and motivations



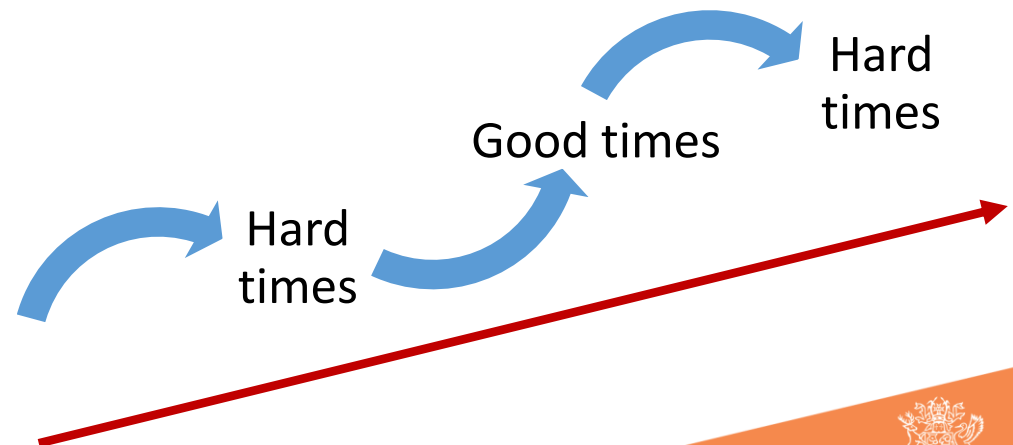
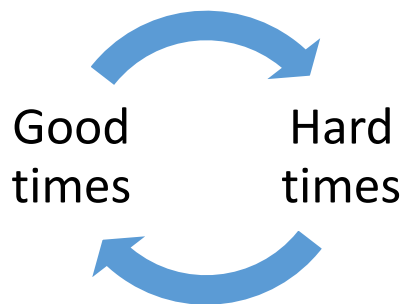
Lesson: there is more keeping people in grazing than straightforward financial self-interest and the desire for profit – this will effect how they define the risks facing them

3. Reliance on 'traditional' risk assessments

- Limited knowledge networks
- Subjective knowledge based on past experience – often described as 'common-sense' 'trial and error' or 'what works'
- Heuristics or 'rules of thumb' to deal with uncertainty
- Lingering distrust of seasonal climate forecasting based on past experiences

4. 'Normalising' drought

- Drought, while difficult, understood as a normal part of rural life, and part of a cycle of good times and bad times
- Prospect of permanent change met with scepticism



5. Decision-making is profoundly difficult

- Even for leading graziers, uncertainty is stressful
- Made more difficult by social norms constraining dialogue about new practices and climate risk
- Expectations on government to help fortify graziers against drought

Possible pathways forward

- More inclusive communication
- Building knowledge networks, breaking down norms
- Building risk-based instruments into 'traditional' grazing knowledge
- Drought assistance that provides safety net but encourages better risk-management adaptation

Need more info?

Go to the DCAP website at <https://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/dcap/>

My report will be found in the grazing section there (or I can send an electronic copy)

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