



RFCS future focus

June 2006 no. 5

Grant applications and advisory committee membership for NSW

Applications for grant funding for NSW were advertised on Thursday 8 June in *The Land*. Applications close on **14 July**. Guidelines for applicants are available at www.rfcs.gov.au. Community, regional and state level bodies are encouraged to apply to deliver the rural financial counselling service in their area.

Expressions of interest for membership of the NSW RFCS Advisory Committee were advertised in *The Land* on Thursday 15 June. Applications for committee membership close on **29 June**. For information about the state RFCS advisory committees and for the terms of reference, visit www.rfcs.gov.au

Tasmania RFCS Advisory Committee members approved

The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon Peter McGauran MP, has approved the membership of the new Tasmania Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) Advisory Committee.

The four members are:

- Ian Sauer, representing primary producers
- Ruth Paterson, representing rural communities
- Alan Johnston, representing the Tasmanian Government
- Glenda Kidman, representing the Australian Government.

The Tasmania RFCS Advisory Committee will assess the grant applications for delivering the rural financial counselling service in Tasmania, oversee the delivery of the RFCS Program in Tasmania and help recruit the counsellors.

Monitoring and evaluation focus group workshop - outcomes

The monitoring and evaluation focus group workshop was held in Canberra on 31 May. All states were represented at the workshop, with either a service chair or rural financial counsellor from each state attending, as well as a representative from all state governments. It was extremely useful to have such a broad range of program experience together at one time to help us further develop the direction for the new program arrangements.

Workshop participants agreed to begin the transition towards some of the key improvements early in 2006-07. Agreement was also reached on the major outcomes for the program over the coming years, including the performance indicators and reporting requirements all of us will need to measure our progress against the outcomes. The information in the reports will help us demonstrate the value of the program when determining its future beyond June 2008. The reporting arrangements have been streamlined to reduce the amount of reporting required of service providers. Client eligibility and the role of rural financial counsellors in farm succession planning was also discussed. This will be further developed with workshop attendees over the coming weeks.

A consistent theme throughout the workshop was the need for program communications to be improved, with greater attention paid to developing networks with other professionals and their associations and with the providers of other financial and counselling services. The Office of Rural Financial Counselling has begun developing a communication plan to address these issues.

For more information about the workshop, phone Bill Woodruff on 02 6272 4020, email bill.woodruff@daff.gov.au

National selection documentation for rural financial counsellors

The Office of Rural Financial Counselling has developed national selection documentation for rural financial counsellors, with the benefit of comments from a number of service chairs and state government representatives.

The documentation includes a job description and duty statement, selection criteria and minimum qualifications, and a suggested total remuneration package. There will be scope to allow employers to pay counsellors currently on higher packages at a higher rate if required.

You can download the selection documentation from our website at www.rfcs.gov.au

For more information about the selection documentation, phone Tamsin Sowden on 02 6272 5449, email tamsin.sowden@daff.gov.au or Glenda Kidman on 02 6272 4233, email glenda.kidman@daff.gov.au

From the ARC helpdesk

Feedback from the computer inventory questionnaire

We would like to thank everyone who responded to the computer inventory questionnaire - we had 100% response (63 services surveyed). We will use the information to plan for any problems that could occur in the upgrade process, to make the rollout of the enhanced ARC database version as smooth as possible and to minimise any disruption to your daily workload.

Selected data from the questionnaire

	Number
Services on ARC version 1.1.2 (current)	all
Services connected to the internet	all
Services on a broadband internet connection	28
Services on operating systems prior to Windows 2000/XP	13
Total laptops in the program	29
Total desktops in the program	63
Services with the ARC database networked	14

There is one important issue I would like to discuss.

According to your data, 14 services operate the ARC database over a network. This makes the upgrade more complex and we will need to provide further installation support for these systems. Having a network has advantages but before you decide to operate this way, keep this in mind:

For ongoing computer networking support, you will need to have an onsite IT support person or someone from your local area - the ARC help desk does not provide networking support.

Once again, thank you all for your participation, which has given us further insight into some of the issues we will face during the ARC upgrade process.

For more information, phone Dean Curley on 02 6272 3549, email dean.curley@daff.gov.au

News

Agricultural Census 2006—The Agricultural Census is conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics every five years and collects production data from primary producers around the country. Forms will arrive in the mail by the end of June and farmers are encouraged to complete and return them within two weeks. For more information, visit www.abs.gov.au

International Landcare Conference—Registrations for the International Landcare Conference in Melbourne on 8-11 October are now open. For a brochure, visit www.internationallandcareconference2006.com.au/default.htm

For comments about *RFCS future focus*, email rfcs@daff.gov.au

[Subscribe](#)

[Unsubscribe](#)

Contact us:

Website: www.rfcs.gov.au

Email: rfcs@daff.gov.au

Address:

Office of Rural Financial Counselling
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
GPO Box 858
Canberra ACT 2601