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MEDIA RELEASE



CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes rallies to support Eugowra in wake of flood

Eugowra residents devastated by flash flooding can continue to call on CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes (CCWF) for financial counselling services.

The CCWF team has been on the ground helping people contact insurance companies, banks, utility providers and any other assistance needed, and people can also phone them on 1800 067 067 to chat or arrange a visit.

It continues CCWF's commitment to the town of about 700 people since disaster struck on November 14, tragically claiming two lives.

More than 200 buildings at Eugowra were damaged or destroyed by the flash flooding, authorities report.

With the need so great, CCWF team members based at Forbes and Parkes quickly rallied to assist Eugowra, helping with the clean-up and offering emotional support in the aftermath.

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes chief executive officer Anne-Marie Mioche visited Eugowra, and the organisation donated goods worth thousands of dollars to provide immediate relief.

Employees swapped normal duties to assist in the town, and even volunteered in their own free time, bringing family members with them.

"Members of our team at Forbes and Parkes did not hesitate, they wanted to be there for the people of Eugowra who have lost so much," Ms Mioche said.

CCWF staff worked alongside defence force personnel going from house to house, and listened to people's stories of survival, and provided information about CCWF services.

Team members met Eugowra residents returning from the evacuation centre at Orange to accompany them to their homes – for some it was the first time they saw their property since the flood.

CCWF workers also rolled up their sleeves to provide practical support, cleaning, ripping up and dragging out carpet and helping clear out other ruined items from houses and yards.

They delivered food and drinks to residents, did first aid when required, and helped people look for cats and dogs, missing since the flood.

CCWF team member Rebecca Palenapa-Pili was one of the group and said it was "just devastating" to see the destruction caused by the flash flooding and wanted to do all she could to alleviate people's distress.

A few days after helping one man, he shared his progress with her.

"He wanted to tell me about his day and what he'd been doing at the evacuation centre, and just how much we'd helped him and how much better he felt, because he said, 'I couldn't have done this without you guys'," Ms Palenapa-Pili said.

Colleague Andrew Bament was at Eugowra for five days leading a crew to sort donated goods – ranging from clothes, shoes, food, toiletries, camping equipment and more – and set them up in an orderly system for community members.

Mr Bament said when he first arrived at Eugowra after the flash flood, the scene reminded him of the cyclones he had seen as a child in far-north Queensland.

“Pictures do not do it justice, the devastation this community has experienced is incredible,” he said.

Egowra sits outside the Catholic Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes, but has links with Forbes.

Bishop Columba Macbeth-Green, Bishop of the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes, travelled to Eugowra to support the neighbouring community, where he said there were people who had “lost everything, in the true sense of the word”.

With prolonged flooding along western NSW catchments this spring, the diocese was in gear to respond to the real and immediate needs facing Eugowra residents.

“We’ve been able to help financially in Eugowra, as we are with Forbes and everywhere else,” he said.

“We did it because they’re our neighbours.”

Bishop Columba, whose father’s family came from Eugowra, offered reassurance to the “strong and resilient” residents of the small town.

“It’s going to be really difficult for the people of Eugowra, and it’s really going to be important to know you are not alone,” he said.

“So I can speak for the people of Forbes, Forbes is always going to be there with you, to help you, and you’ve just got to know that you’re not alone, because sometimes in a situation like that, you can feel a bit alone, especially later on.

“Forbes will always be here, hang in there.

“God hasn’t forgotten you, and neither have we.”

Ends.....

CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes provides social services, caring for the well-being of individuals, families and communities.

We respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging



- Mental Health
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