

# National Drought Survey





# Background

## The Current Drought

- Due to abnormally warm temperatures during 2017 – 2018, and an exceptionally dry 2018, much of Southeastern Australia is currently declared drought-affected [1].
- Drought directly impacts the livelihoods of agricultural workers leading to increased financial hardship and psychological distress.

## The Salvation Army's Response

- TSA has been engaged in a concerted effort to provide assistance to drought affected agricultural workers since around mid-2018
- In December 2018, the Department of Industry and Innovation Science provided TSA a grant of 13.7 million to provide assistance in 106 drought affected LGAs across NSW, QLD, SA, VIC and TAS.
  - Eligible recipients could obtain a direct deposit of up to \$2000 and \$1000 in the form of a gift card or business deposit.
  - Assessors and rural chaplains also provided informational and emotional support to recipients where needed.

# The Current Study

## What?

**The current study is an evaluation of TSA's involvement in the Drought Community Support Initiative that exclusively used DIIS grant money of \$13.7 million**

## Why?

### **To find out:**

- **What did/did not work well in the service delivery**
- **How the service can be improved**
- **Whether the assistance met recipients' needs**
- **What demographic / psychosocial factors influenced recipients' experiences of the assistance**

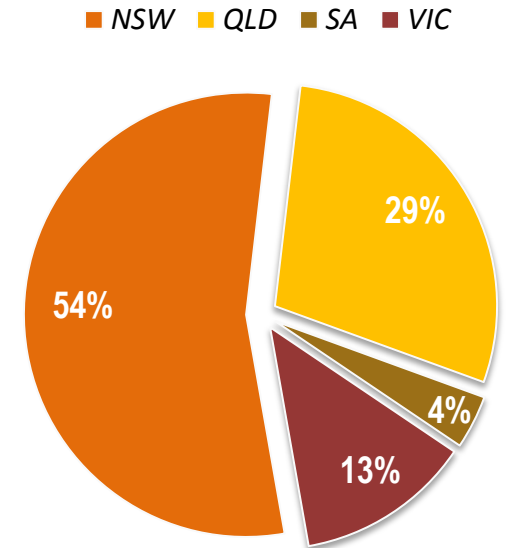
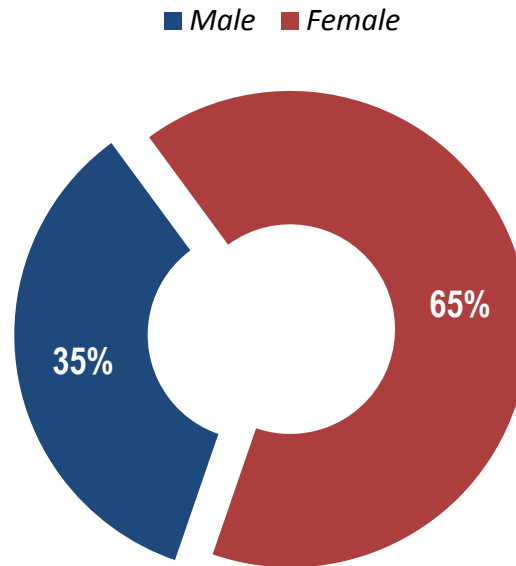
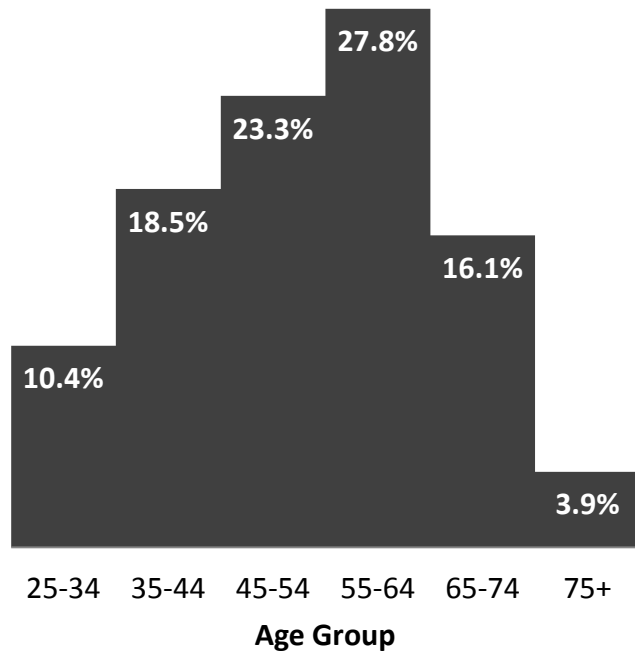
## How?

### **Dispensing surveys that:**

- **Included eight compulsory quantitative and three optional qualitative components**
- **Were sent either via post or online with a 1 week reminder**
- **Were sent 1+ months after recipients were approved for assistance**

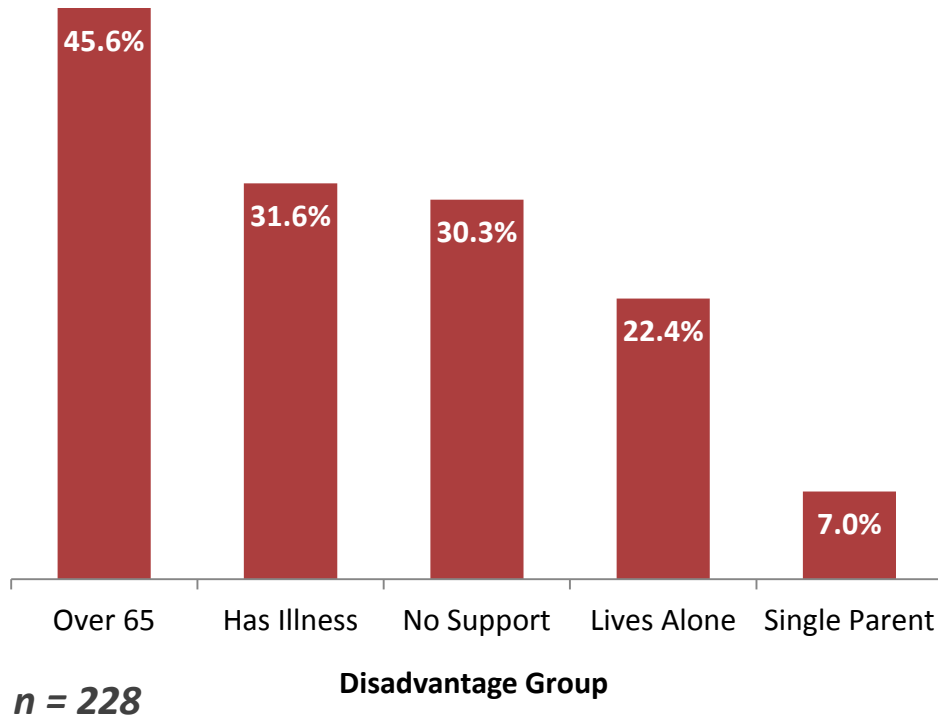
# Who received the Drought Assistance?

540 of 1451 assistance recipients who received surveys completed them satisfactorily providing a response rate of 37.2%

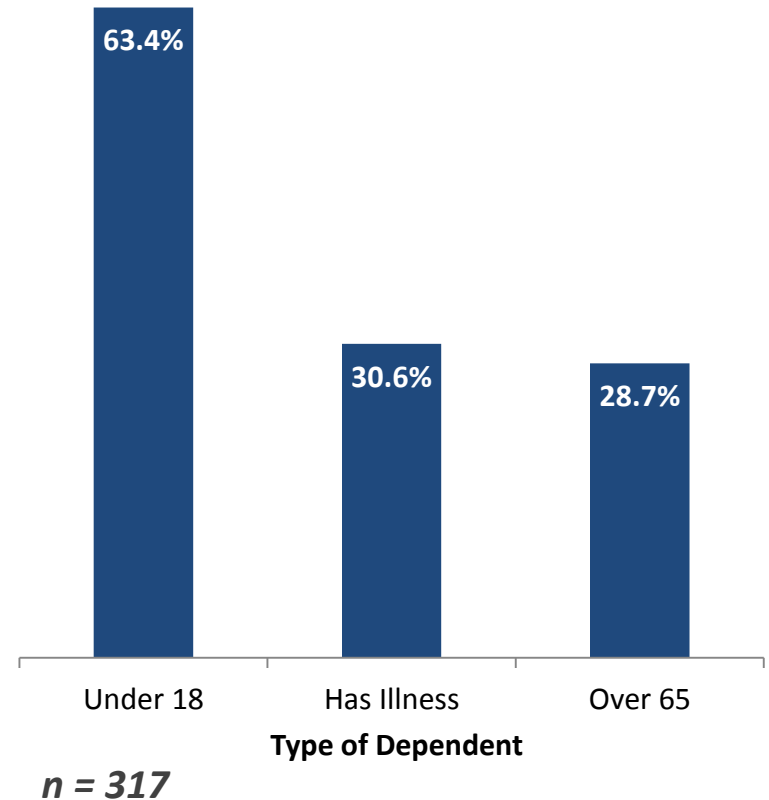


# Who received the Drought Assistance?

42% had at least one vulnerability



59% had at least one dependent



# What type of Assistance did farmers receive?



91.3%  
Cash EFT  
Deposit



40.4%  
Universal  
Gift Card



20.7 %  
Local Business  
Deposit



8.5%  
Informational  
Support



6.9%  
Emotional  
Support

Despite a small number specifying having received emotional support, the contact with staff and the assistance itself had an emotional impact:

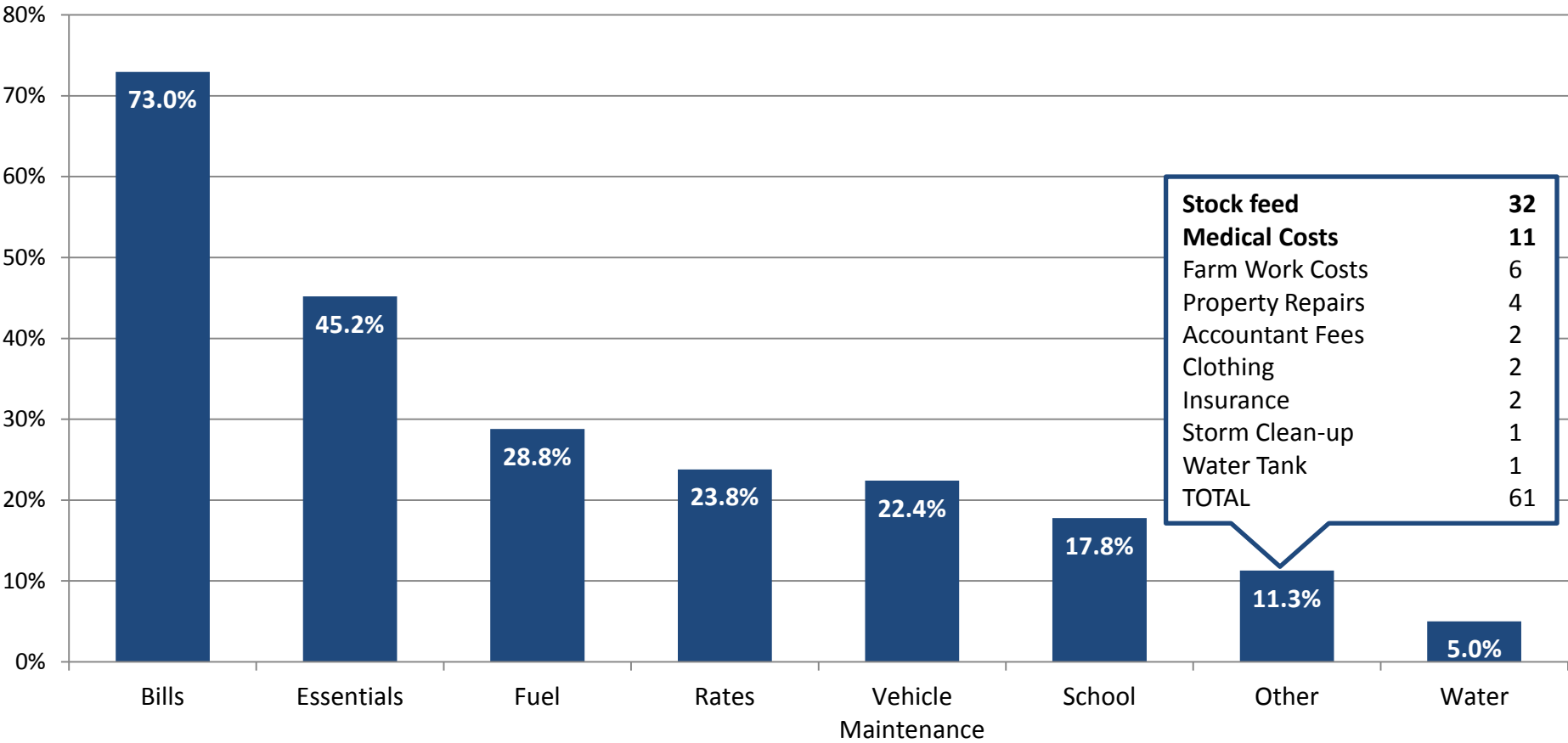
*“It was a relief to not have to worry about how to pay for the groceries or start of school costs. This helped immensely with our mental well being.”*

*“It warms my heart with the help you guys have given us and also knowing that someone is thinking of us.”*

# What was the monetary assistance spent on?



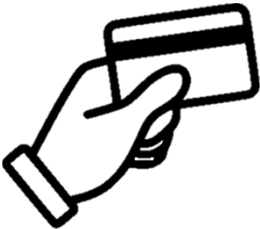
Majority of cash deposit recipients spent assistance on bills, followed by essential items.



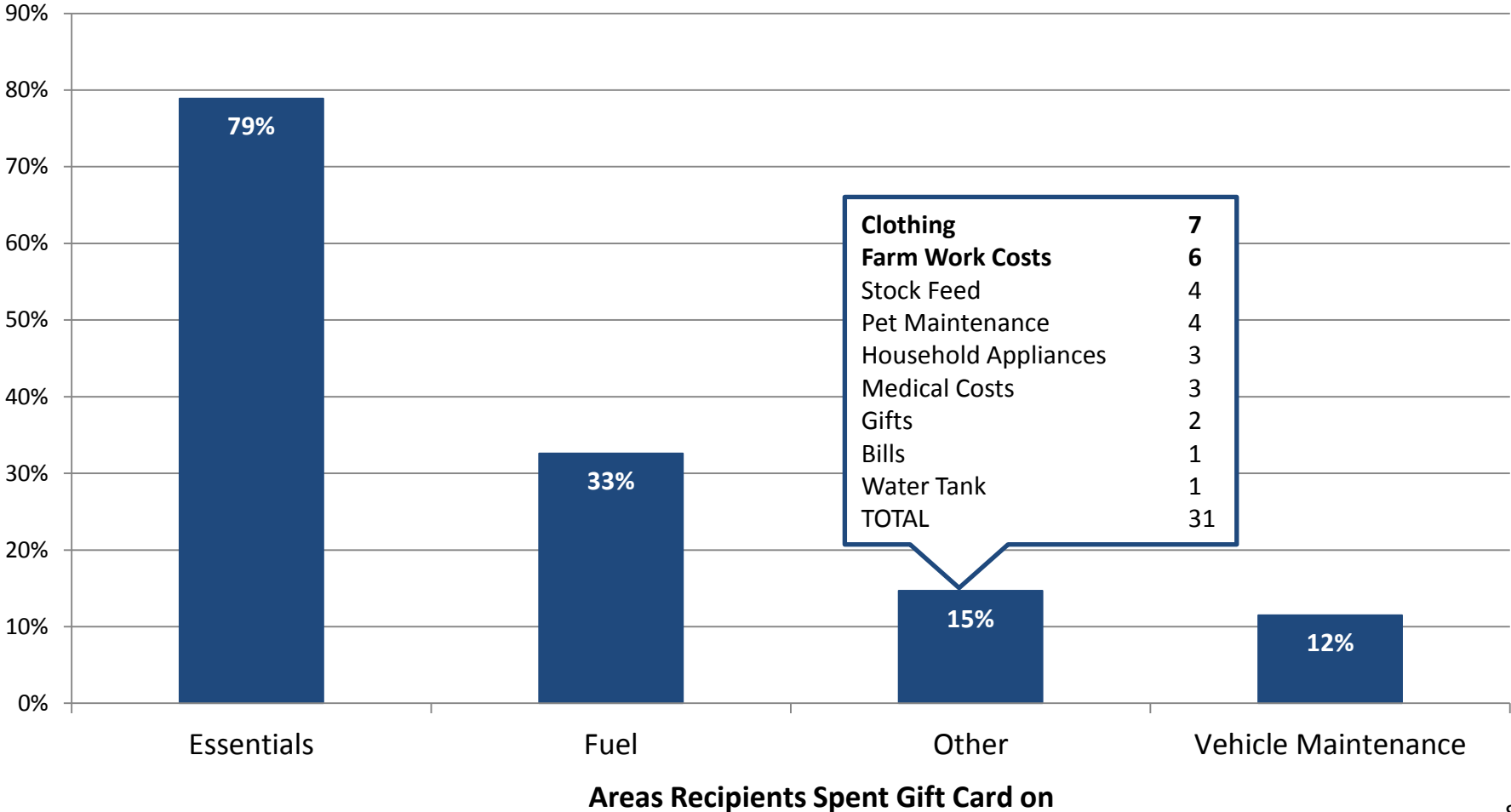
Stock feed	32
Medical Costs	11
Farm Work Costs	6
Property Repairs	4
Accountant Fees	2
Clothing	2
Insurance	2
Storm Clean-up	1
Water Tank	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>61</b>

Areas Recipients Spent Cash Assistance on

# What was the monetary assistance spent on?



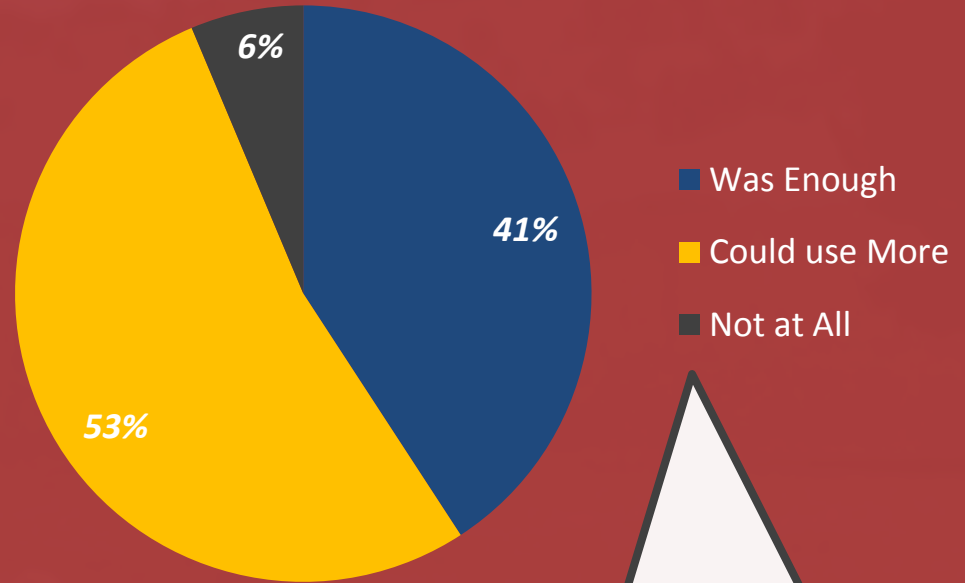
Majority of gift card recipients spent it on essential items at local stores, followed by fuel.







# Was the financial assistance enough?



## Reasons respondents provided for assistance not being enough include:

- Still having outstanding bills/accounts to pay
- The high prices of water and feed for stock
- The ongoing nature of drought
- Assistance providing too short-term relief
- Unforeseen medical expenses



# What impact did the financial assistance have?

## Reduced levels of stress/worry...

**50% to a great extent**

**48% to some extent**

**2% not at all**

*“We are grateful for the assistance that we received it certainly relieved us of some worry and stress about day to day living expenses.”*

## Helped ability to perform daily activities...

**56% to a great extent**

**42% to some extent**

**1% not at all**

*“The funds have enabled me to buy fuel to pump water for the stock as all dam are dry and have been for about a year now.”*



# What impact did the emotional & informational have?

**Emotional support increased wellbeing...\***

**57% to a great extent**

**43% to some extent**

**0% not at all**

*"I was very humbled by the prayer that was said for us, I felt blessed that we really mattered going through this dry time in our beautiful country/area."*

**Information provided increased clarity on where to get more help...\***

**52% to a great extent**

**46% to some extent**

**2% not at all**

\*Based on answers from 37 respondents who reported receiving emotional support, and 46 respondents who reported receiving informational support

# How would have recipients managed without the assistance?

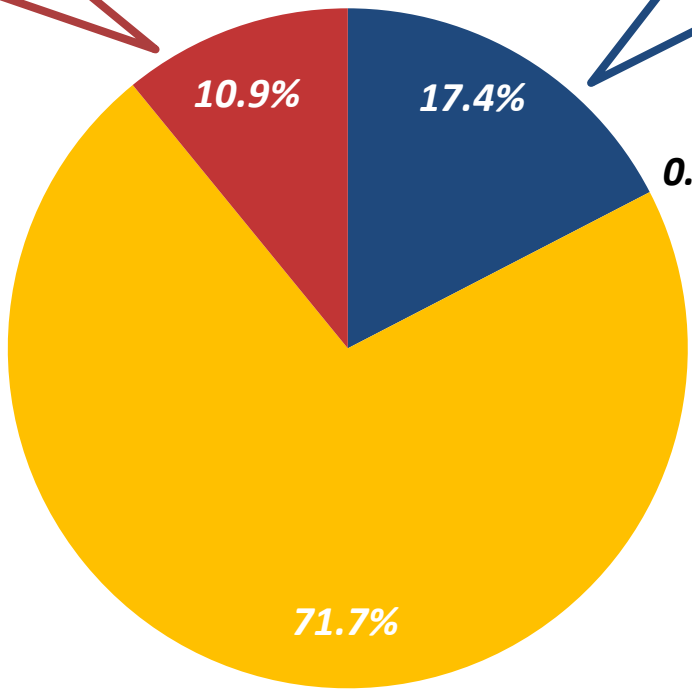
- 1) Significantly more likely to have no support nearby
- 2) Have significantly lower scores on the Personal Wellbeing Index than both other groups.

- 1) Significantly more likely to be someone over 65
- 2) Have significantly higher scores on the Personal Wellbeing Index than both other groups.

*“Our remote situation leads to further isolation and the lack of government support and funding in our regions means we end up more disconnected than ever.*

[...]

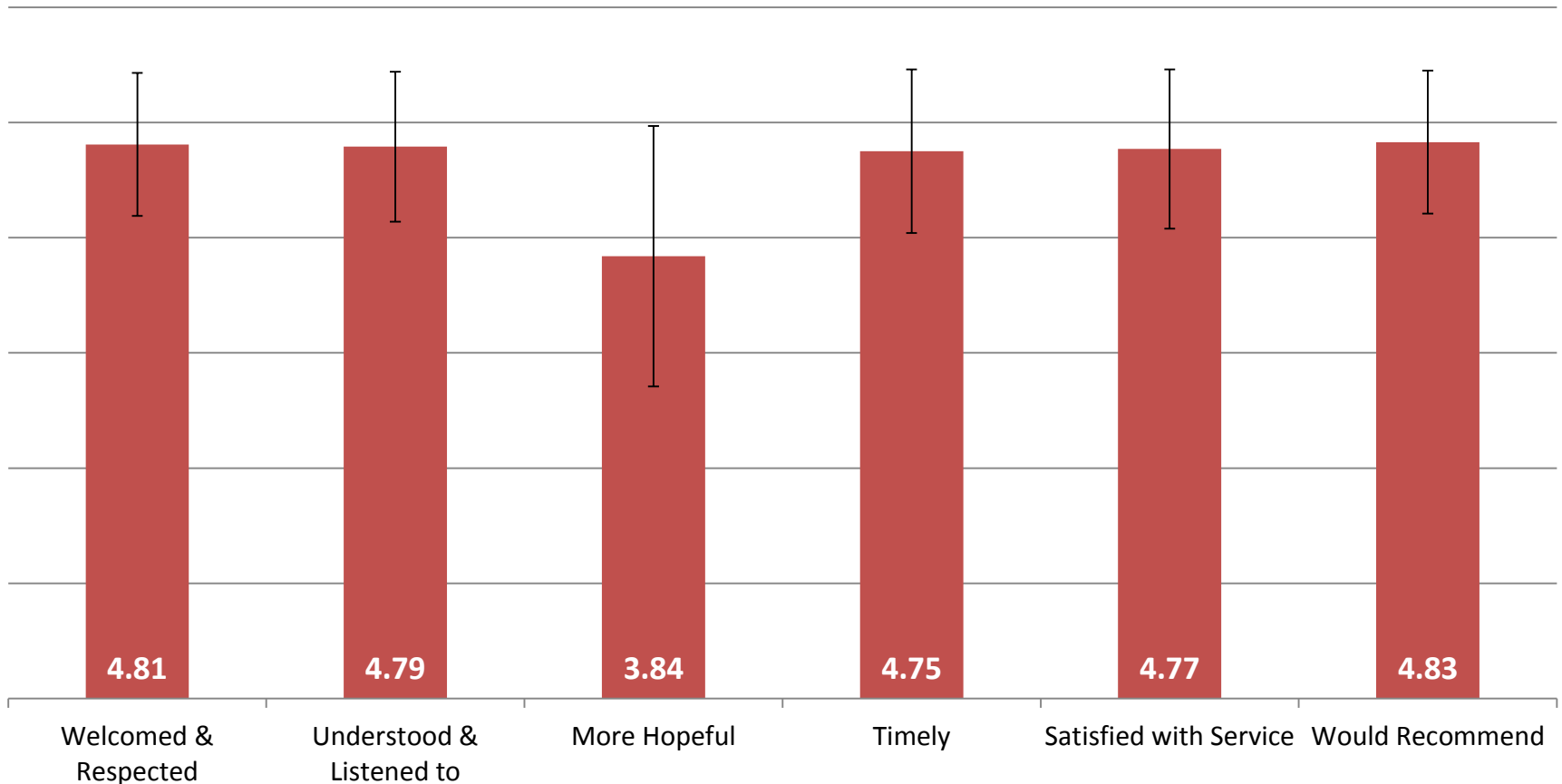
*We are the forgotten area in NSW whilst the eastern side has more voices and louder ones.”*



- Would have managed very well
- Would have managed fairly well
- Would have managed poorly
- Not have managed at all

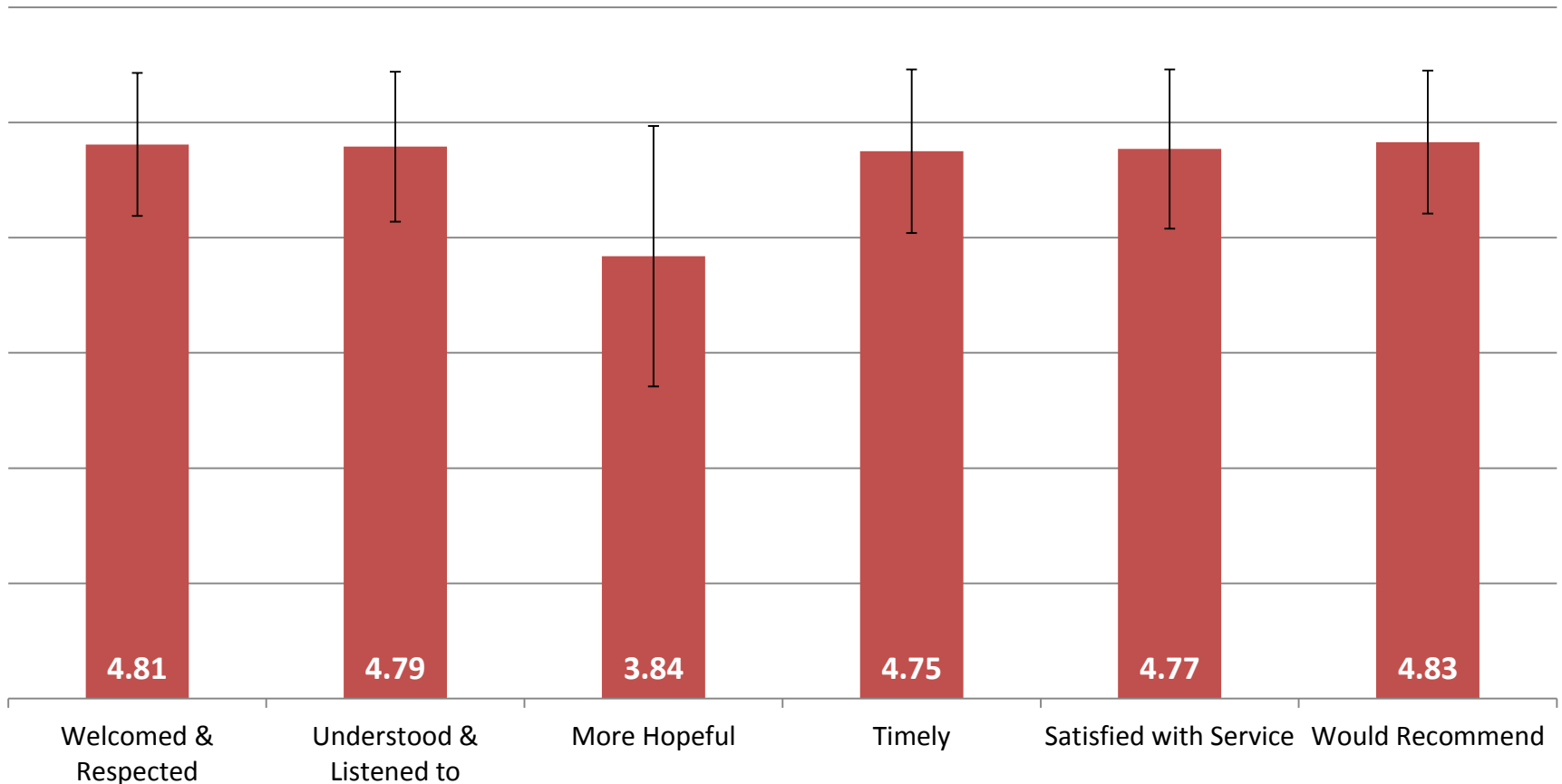
# Customer Satisfaction with TSA's Service

- Respondents indicated on a 5-point scale the extent of their agreement to six statements regarding TSA's service, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
- Average scores (average = 4.79 out of 5) indicate respondents tended to agree or strongly agree with most statements pertaining to positive experiences of TSA's service



# Customer Satisfaction with TSA's Service

- A lower score on the “hopeful” item compared to other items may indicate the limit of TSA’s assistance being able to have a long-term impact:
  - *“Unfortunately, I don't think increasing hope is necessarily within the scope of your staff but I was impressed with the professional manner and empathy expressed by the staff member who took my enquiry.”*
- Alternatively, the “hopeful” item may have measured something other than TSA’s service (e.g., trait optimism) as it had a low correlation with the other scale items



# Customer Satisfaction with TSA's Service

In their written feedback respondents commented on the simplicity of the application process and their positive experiences with staff...

*"The whole process was quite simple and was in no way the horrid experience I thought it might be."*

*"There were no time consuming or tedious forms or a drawn out application process - just a phone call with a very friendly man who was kind & understanding."*

*"The lady we spoke to was like an old friend by the end of the phone call. It was so lovely to speak to a person that seemed to genuinely care about us farmers."*

*"The Salvation Army people I dealt with were non-judgemental and extremely kind and were willing to listen."*





# Respondents' Personal Wellbeing

On average respondents scored **72.4** across items on the Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI), which is below the normative range of 74.2-76.7 for Australians [2].

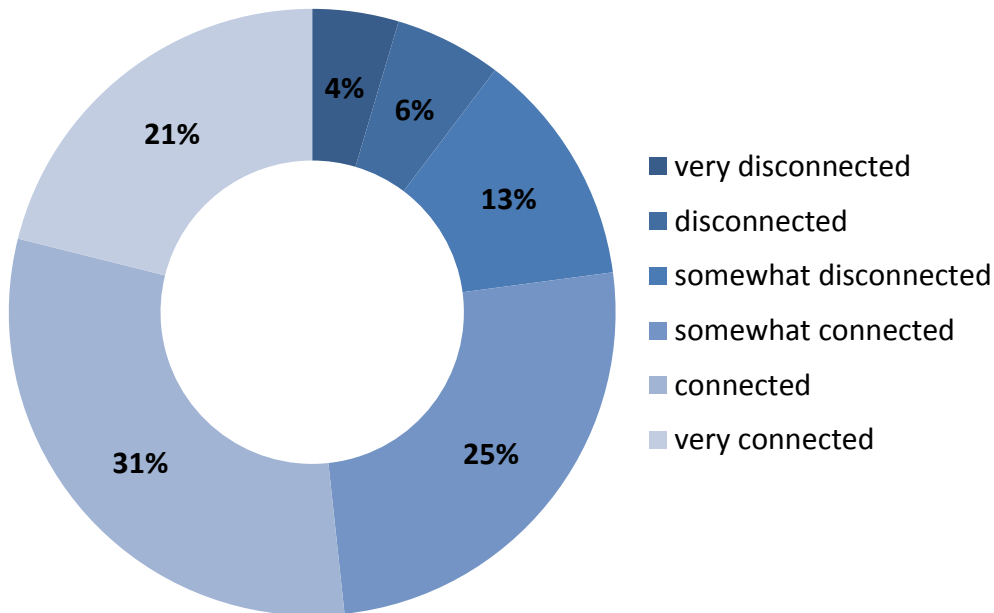
Previous research has found farming populations differ on specific items of the PWI compared to the general population [3].

PWI Item	Sample Average	National Average
Standard of Living	71.7	78.1
Health	67.7	74.5
Achievement in Life	69.3	73.5
Personal Relationships	77.3	79.5
Personal Safety	83	79.4
Community Connectedness	73	71.3
Future Security	61.6	71.3
Spirituality	75.5	-

# Respondents' Personal Wellbeing

## Community Connectedness

Circle the picture that best describes your relationship with the community at large. (S = Self; C = Community at Large)



Respondents most commonly reported feeling connected to the community.

On a scale of 1 (very disconnected) to 6 (very connected) respondents had an average score of 4.35.

Previous research found average scores of 2.4 in US college students [4] and 2.7 in prison inmates [5].

*"I seen when the drought occurred and is still occurring how many people came/come together and help one another. That makes me smile."*

# Respondents' Personal Wellbeing

## What was associated with Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) scores in the current sample?

Conducted a 4-step hierarchical regression analysis, adding the below factors believed to be associated with personal wellbeing:

### Demographic Characteristics

- Age
- Gender
- Household Number

Step 1

### Potential Disadvantages

- Vulnerability Status
- Carer Status

Step 2

### Community Connectedness

- Inclusion of Community in Self Scale

Step 3

### Assistance Related Variables

- Average Service Ratings
- Monetary Amount Received

Step 4

### Results of the analysis found...

1. Greater community connectedness was associated with a large increase in wellbeing
2. Having at least one vulnerability was associated with a small decrease in wellbeing
3. Higher average service ratings were associated with a small increase in wellbeing
4. Increased age was associated with a small increase in wellbeing

# Summary of Results

- Only a small proportion of respondents reported receiving non-material assistance (i.e., emotional support and/or information).
- Service ratings were high overall and few reported having an unmet need
- More than half of respondents asserted they could have used more financial assistance
- Majority of respondents said they would have managed the drought poorly without TSA's assistance HOWEVER:
  - Those over 65 were more likely to say they would have managed fairly well
  - Those with no support nearby were more likely to say they would not have managed at all
- Respondents scored high on community connectedness – and this had the largest positive association with PWI
- Perceived service quality had a small but statistically significant association with PWI

# Thank you!

For further research questions, please contact:

[research@aue.salvationarmy.org](mailto:research@aue.salvationarmy.org)



# References

- [1] Bureau of Meteorology. (2019, April 9). Special Climate Statement 70 – drought conditions in eastern Australian and impact on water resources in the Murray-Darling Basin. Retrieved from <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/current/statements/>
- [2] Capic, T., Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, M., Cummins, R. A., Khor, S., Richardson, B., Greenwood, C., Olsson, C., & Hutchinson, D. (2018). Australian Unity Wellbeing Index: Report 35.0, Financial Control. *Geelong: Australian Centre on Quality of Life, School of Psychology, Deakin University*. <http://www.acqol.com.au/projects#reports>
- [3] Hogan, A., Polidano, C., Russell, J., & Stakelum, P. (2008). The social wellbeing of rural Australians: An analysis of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) longitudinal dataset. *Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry*.
- [4] Branand, B., Mashek, D., Wray-Lake, L. & Coffey, J. K. (2015) Inclusion of College Community in the Self: A Longitudinal Study of the Role of Self-Expansion in Students' Satisfaction. *Journal of College Student Development*, 56(8), p.829-844.
- [5] Moore, K. E., Milam, K. C., Folk, J. B., & Tangey, J. P. (2017) Self-Sigma Among Criminal Offenders: Risk and Protective Factors. *Stigma and Health*, 3(3), p.241-252.