



Mind Your Language:

Tips on Positive Messaging for Drought Coverage

As the impact of drought conditions continues throughout central and western NSW, NALAG (National Association for Loss and Grief) and other “on-the-ground” agencies and organisations have identified an increasing need for more positive messaging/language surrounding drought discussions and coverage. In response to this identified need, NALAG has put together some suggestions to help promote more positive messaging.

NOTE: This is not to diminish or downplay the reality or impact of drought, but to promote resilience, foster hope and bring communities together rather than perpetuate potentially counter-productive negative thinking.

Why do we need more positive messaging?

- To **build capacity** for individuals and communities to **cope/manage/recover**;
- Challenge the “whinging farmer” image;
- Acknowledge the impact of constant negativity – negativity can inhibit acceptance of help; the “victim” tag can become self-fulfilling;
- Change the outlook to one of **realistic hope**.
- Promote the notion of helping others;
- Autonomy promotes **resilience**;
- Encourage a **positive image** of agricultural industries;
- Support the “**new**” **generation** of primary producers as smart and **innovative business people**



Positive Messaging Tips

Use **plain English** to deliver a message more effectively

Avoid “click-bait” – don’t use catchy headlines or phrases to invoke emotion at the expense of a **realistic message**; remove the emotion where possible and appropriate

Photos/film imagery - where possible, avoid the use of overly emotive images that do not adequately and appropriately portray the reality.

Avoid agency “bashing”: hold agencies/service providers accountable without promoting an adversarial perception, which may discourage people/communities from seeking assistance. Offer solutions not critiques.

Terms to Avoid	Advice
Victim	Use “affected by/ impacted” ; encompasses whole community
Disadvantaged	Use “affected by/ impacted” – focus on what/who communities/individuals are/have rather than being defined by drought
Help	Use “support” instead; encourage autonomy to build resilience
No rainfall forecast	Instead, refer to current conditions continuing
Isolation (social/geographic)	Focus instead on a need to connect; try not to define individuals/communities as “isolated”;
Poor Farmers	Remove the pity
Broke/destitute/ battling/struggling/ suffering	Avoid using these terms to define individuals/communities; focus on management/strategies/adaptation
Stoic	Instead, use “resilient” , “innovative” or simply “strong”
The farmers	The phrase sets this collective apart; instead use “rural industries/communities” or “primary producers” ;
Farmer’s wife	Fine to use if it doesn’t assume that a woman is not a primary producer/business partner in the operation

For best practice guidelines on mental health and suicide reporting, visit: www.mindframe-media.info

Need advice or assistance?

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