



ANNUAL REPORT

2022- 2023

Rural Business Tasmania

*Supporting and Growing
Rural and Regional Enterprises*



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▲ Chairman's Report

As you are aware over the past year regional Tasmanian's have been severely impacted by rising inflation, increased interest rates, higher cost of living expenses, labour shortages and seasonal weather events.

Our counselling team have been busy working with local farming families, small business and communities to support them through this challenging period.

The impact of the October 2022 floods saw many regional communities, farming families, and small businesses experiencing serious financial stress and hardship. The floods were significant and widespread with property damage, loss of income, limited accessibility to essential services and consequent downturn in tourism some of the many impacts experienced. Our team worked closely with State Government agencies during and post this emergency to support locals, as they dealt with crisis and recovery. Whilst some of the damage to housing and infrastructure can be repaired in relatively short time the overall financial impact can indeed last for years.

It was therefore very disappointing that through non-renewal of funding the Regional Small Business Support Program ceased 30.6.23. This has left the regional small business community that continue to experience hardship without access to face to face, free and confidential financial counselling support. With continued challenges for those in business the importance of the organisation as a support will continue to be required. Rural Business Tasmania continues to lobby Government to consider future funding to support these communities.

Somehow the fact that almost 50% of farms depend on "off the farm" income and any negative impact on business has a negative effect on the farming community is either ignored or not understood. Whilst we are continuing to highlight quality and quantity, we need to also highlight the increases in production and transport costs against the low farmgate prices. The increase of mental stress and pressure on any business operator, being a small business or a farmer doesn't differ much and if we consider that according to the 2023 Farmsafe Report out of 1338 farmers interviewed

45% contemplated self-harm or suicide it is obvious that support needed is on the increase.

I would like to express our thanks to Hon. Jo Palmer MLC and convey our appreciation for her support and commitment to the agricultural industry throughout the year. We look forward to continuing to work with the Minister in building this valuable relationship with the Tasmanian Government in FY24.

Thank you to our funding bodies, partners and colleagues within the industry who have worked collaboratively with us to support our great rural and regional communities.

Well done to the Rural Business Tasmania team, who continue to provide important financial counselling support and deliver educational and community support programs to all areas of Tasmania. I recognise the significant contributions of the Executive led by CEO Elizabeth Skirling for leadership and achievements over the past 12 months.

Finally, I would like to thank the Board for their significant contributions and their continued focus on building strategic goals that will support Rural Business Tasmania's financial stability in the long term. The shared expertise of the board through their collective knowledge of Tasmania's business and primary industries sectors has ensured that the needs of the organisation are continuing to be sustained.



Michal Frydrych
Chairman – Rural Business Tasmania

▲ Chief Executive Officer's Report

We are pleased to present the Rural Business Tasmania Annual Report.

The strength and reputation gained since inception in 1986 has positioned Rural Business Tasmania as a key service provider in Tasmania's rural and regional communities. Rural Business Tasmania play a critical role in supporting our clients and community in adapting to ongoing change, encouraging resilience, and providing a vehicle for collaboration and effective service provision. The delivery of Rural Business Tasmania's vision focusses on businesses wishing to expand their skills in business and financial management, by guiding our clients to work on the business rather than in the business.

Rural Business Tasmania continues to participate in industry discussions, to be available and ready to assist where appropriate. We have strong networks and stakeholder relationships and actively seek opportunities to work together.

The Australian Government, supported by the Tasmanian Government, continued to expand and develop programs and concepts to assist with adaptation, innovation and resilience. We continue to look for opportunities to support our business clients to build a resilient, adaptive enterprise through managing the ever-present challenges and building risk mitigation strategies.

We thank the Australian and Tasmanian Governments for their continued backing and various funding streams to deliver programs outlined through this report.

I would like to thank Board members for their time and support throughout the period. Our operational team continues to evolve as new programs and opportunities arise. Our team have provided professional service to each participant of our programs through direct service delivery or supportive administration. Each has passion for the work we do and take pride in the communities that we support.

I hope you enjoy reading of the activities for the year and welcome enquiries and the chance to discuss further.



Elizabeth Skirving

Chief Executive Officer - Rural Business Tasmania

▲ Who We Are

Established in 1986, Rural Business Tasmania Inc. is a not-for-profit association that primarily offers financial counselling and business support expertise to rural and regional communities

Rural Business Tasmania's key objective is to help rural and regional families, businesses, and the community manage the evolving demands and challenges facing the sector. Rural Business Tasmania has assisted many hundreds of Tasmanians to find pathways to sustainable futures. We have extensive networks that connect quickly and deeply into rural and regional communities. Our services help clients to gain a better understanding of their financial position and identify financial and business risk and opportunities. We assist clients to negotiate with lenders and creditors where necessary and refer to specialist service providers including accountants, family mediation, health and well being counsellors.

▲ Vision

A sustainable and prosperous future for rural and regional Tasmania.

▲ Mission

To develop and deliver services and projects within the rural and small business sector to foster viable resilient and sustainable development for Tasmanians.

▲ Rural Relief Fund of Tasmania

The Rural Relief Fund is owned and supported by Tasmanian rural community members, and co-ordinated by Rural Business Tasmania.

In times of crisis and financial hardship, the Rural Relief Fund supports farming families and their communities in their time of most need.

We gratefully acknowledge the ongoing support provided by Nicholas Coleman, Shane Ashlin, The Table Cape Tulip Farm, Zest and TFGA who all generously assisted in raising funds for the charity this year.

Donations made to the fund have this year provided immediate assistance to five applicants suffering hardship, totalling \$8,470.

Donations made to the fund are fully tax deductible as the Rural Relief Fund is a registered charity with the ATO.

▲ Our Strategic Goals

1

Assist clients to understand their business & financial management outcomes.

2

Implementation of stand-alone complementary Fee for Service.

3

Raise awareness in the rural and regional business community of our role, purpose and value of Rural Business Tasmania.

4

Support young people to increase business acumen, financial and functional literacy to support workforce and industry for the future.

5

Position Rural Business Tasmania to partner with corporate support and expand grant opportunities by:

- ▲ Understanding and articulating our value proposition
- ▲ Identifying key partners; and
- ▲ Successfully implementing key grant outcomes.

▲ Our Core Values

Our core values guide the way we work and behave:



Safety

A genuine care for the health and wellbeing of our people, clients and the wider community



Professional

Providing excellence in service



Trust

Working together to achieve common goals and shared outcomes



Collaboration

Working together as one team



Integrity

Staying true to our values even when it's hard



Caring

Truly caring for our clients

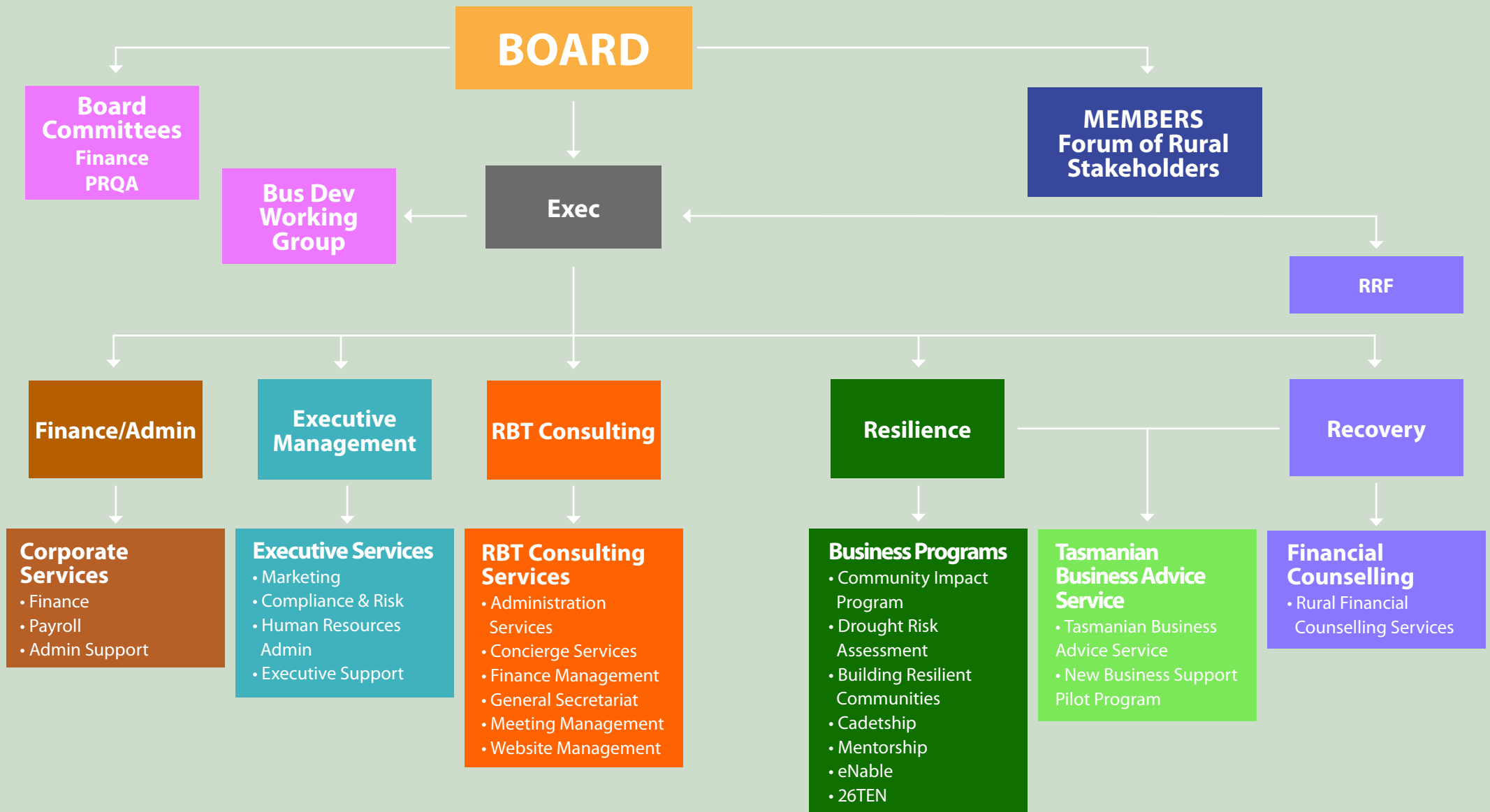


Empathy

Understanding the concerns and fears of our clients



▲ Organisational Structure



▲ Board Members

Name	Appointed	Position
Michal Frydrych	29/01/2014	Chairman from 20/11/2019
Christopher Bishop	14/2/2022	Treasurer from 28/11/2022
Keith Rice	14/12/2016	Board Member
Tony Barker	16/04/2012	Board Member
Belinda Hazell	18/11/2016	Board Member
Sophie Milic	14/02/2022	Board Member
Rebecca Duffy	14/02/2022	Board Member
Karen Robinson	14/12/2016	Associate Board Member

Rural Business Tasmania is governed by the Board, supported by the Reference Group who provides advice and assistance as required. Members are invited to the Board as a representative of the community, industry or member group.



Picture (L-R): Michal Frydrych, Tony Barker, Karen Robinson, Elizabeth Skirving, Christopher Bishop, Rebecca Duffy, Sophie Milic (Absent – Keith Rice, Belinda Hazell)



Michal Frydrych
Chairman

- ▲ Business strategy
- ▲ Marketing
- ▲ Project management
- ▲ Staff development



Tony Barker
Vice Chair

- ▲ Diploma in Agriculture
- ▲ Diploma in Farm Management
- ▲ 2006 Nuffield Farming Scholarship



Christopher Bishop
Treasurer

- ▲ Fellow CA ANZ
- ▲ Bachelor of Business Accounting
- ▲ Strategic Business Advisor
- ▲ Business analysis and strategic planning



Keith Rice
Director

- ▲ Retired Former CEO of Poppy Growers & Primary Employers Tasmania
- ▲ Board Positions



Belinda Hazell OAM
Director

- ▲ MBA (Agricultural Innovation)
- ▲ Advanced Diploma of Horticulture
- ▲ Diploma of Occupational Health and Safety
- ▲ Board positions



Rebecca Duffy
Director

- ▲ Bachelor of Agricultural Science (Oenology)
- ▲ Business Management
- ▲ Marketing/Strategy Development
- ▲ Board positions



Sophie Milic
Director

- ▲ Masters of Public Administration
- ▲ Bachelor of Commerce and Arts
- ▲ Strategic Communications and Stakeholder engagement
- ▲ Director of Coaldale Walnuts



Karen Robinson
Associate Director

- ▲ CEO Rural Youth
- ▲ Board positions

Meet Our Team



Back L-R Standing Up:
 Andrew van Rooyen, Tania Cornwall,
 Karen Hinds, Elizabeth Skirving,
 Chantal Filgate, Linda Groombridge,
 Peter Aitchison

Front L-R Sitting Down: Kate Cox,
 Roly Chugg, Steve Hansen, Michelle
 Williams



Elizabeth Skirving

Chief Executive Officer

- ▲ Bachelor of Business
- ▲ 5th generation farmer
- ▲ Governance
- ▲ Board positions



Chantal Filgate

Chief Operating Officer

- ▲ AdvDip Ldrshp & Mgt
- ▲ Dip Financial Services



Stephen Hansen

Head of Business Projects

- ▲ Adv. Dip of Accounting
- ▲ Cert Ag Bus Mgt
- ▲ Financial Counsellor



Roly Chugg

Head of Recovery Services

- ▲ Diploma of Community Services (Financial Counselling)
- ▲ Adv. Dip. of Ag.Bus. Management
- ▲ Certificate in Financial Services



Michelle Williams

Head of Finance and Admin

- ▲ Certificate IV Book Keeping
- ▲ Financial Management
- ▲ Support Services



Peter Aitchison

Financial Counsellor

- ▲ Diploma in Financial Services (Financial Planning)



Andrew van Rooyen

Financial Counsellor

- ▲ Diploma of Finance & Mortgage Broking Management



Linda Groombridge

Associate Financial Counsellor / Project Support Officer

- ▲ Dip Financial Counselling
- ▲ Grad Cert Business Management
- ▲ Advanced Leadership Program



Karen Hinds

Finance Officer

- ▲ Certificate IV in Financial Services
- ▲ Finance and Admin support



Tania Cornwall

Executive Assistant

- ▲ Marketing
- ▲ Cert IV in Bus (Sm Bus Management)



Kate Cox

Admin Officer

- ▲ Marketing
- ▲ Admin Support



▲ Our Team

Position	Incumbent	Term
Chief Executive Officer	Elizabeth Skirving	30/10/06 - Current
Chief Operating Officer	Chantal Filgate	04/05/20 - Current
Executive Assistant	Tania Cornwall	14/02/20 - Current
Head of Recovery Services	Roland 'Roly' Chugg	19/08/13 - Current
Financial Counsellor	Peter Aitchison	18/10/2021 - Current
Financial Counsellor	Andrew van Rooyen	10/01/2022 - Current
Head of Business Projects	Stephen 'Steve' Hansen	20/02/20 - Current
Projects Officer/Financial Counsellor	Linda Groombridge	11/12/19 - Current
Head of Finance and Admin	Michelle Williams	11/7/22 - Current
Finance Officer	Karen Hinds	15/02/21 - Current
Admin Officer	Kate Cox	26/11/19 - Current
Board and Executive Support	Joanne McCullagh	14/06/22 - 29/09/22
Financial Counsellor	Nanna 'Lovisa' Stagoll	20/10/2021 - 11/01/23
Financial Counsellor	Timothy 'Tim' Hickey	14/09/20 - 27/01/23
Associate Financial Counsellor	John Dunbar	18/02/21 - 31/01/23
Business Development Officer	Rhett McKenzie-Edwards	06/04/20 - 21/06/23

▲ Rural Financial Counselling Service

Rural Business Tasmania has successfully delivered the Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) in Tasmania since its inception in 1986. We are pleased to advise that our current program which was due to renew 30th June 2024 has now been extended until 30th June 2026

Rural Business Tasmania have employed Rural Financial Counsellors based in the following locations:

- ▲ North West
- ▲ North/North East
- ▲ Southern

(RFCS) remains the flagship program for the organisation — a highly respected and valued service that has been operational for over 30 years and we continue to look for ways in which we can boost the support we provide to Tasmanian rural and regional agribusinesses.

A brief summary of factors for 2022-2023 impacting on primary production and ultimately the demand for the RFCS include:

- ▲ In 2022-2023 the State appeared to be broken into two halves. In the Northern Regions rainfall in some cases has delayed planting of crops whereas in the Southern Regions some farmers have turned on their irrigators due to the dry conditions.
- ▲ Beef and Sheep prices over the past 12 months have dropped dramatically which is having a significant impact on farmers' cash flow.
- ▲ Multiple interest rate rises through out the last 12 months, has continued to place financial pressure on household and business budgets. Farmers have experienced the full effects of these interest rate rises as their fixed rate interest only loans roll over through the period. This has lead to a large number of farmers experiencing increased loan repayments, with some reporting their payments doubling as they transfer to new interest rate loan agreements with their banks.
- ▲ Lack of labour was an issue throughout the year, in a lot of cases not enough pickers to do the work.
- ▲ Inflationary pressures have caused financial hardship across farming businesses with increased household costs, fuel costs, fertiliser expenses, fencing materials having the greatest impact. These factors continue to have impact on primary production resulting in high demand for the RFCS.

▲ Client Levels

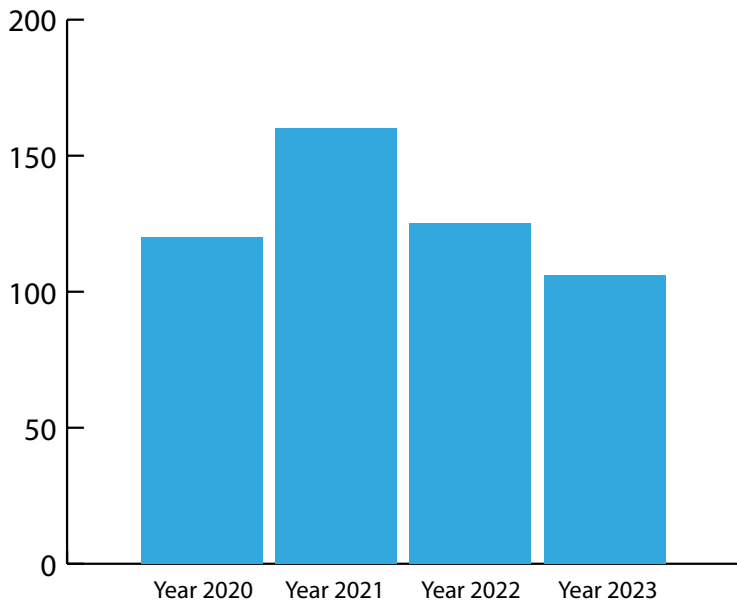
Client levels reduced slightly throughout the year from a peak of 127 clients to 106 clients as at the 30th June 2023.

It should be noted that overall 120 individual clients were assisted with a total of 2153 actual client interactions.

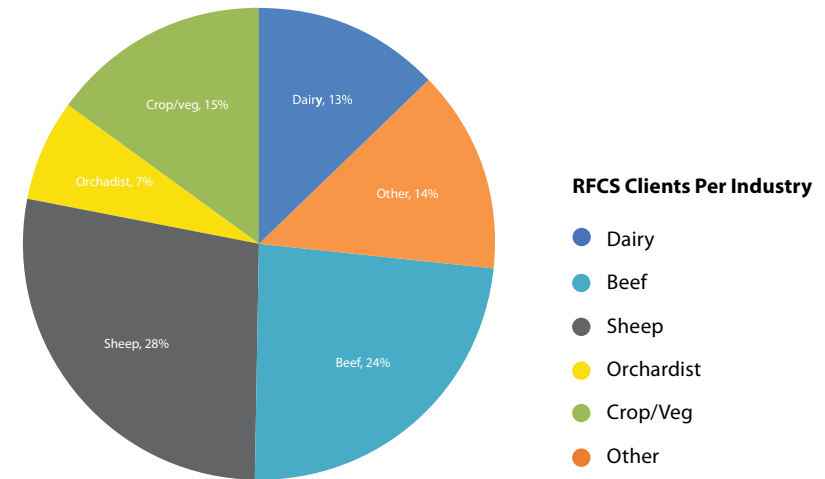
With interest rates steadily increasing throughout the year, fixed rate loans ending, increased farm infrastructure costs, and all other farm expenses increasing such as fuel and labour costs, there has been an increase in requests for our service in the last quarter of this year.

The majority of our new clients were referred from a government agency (e.g. Services Australia, Dept. Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry, etc.) or through word of mouth. It has been noted that engagement of RFCS via social media continues to grow in popularity.

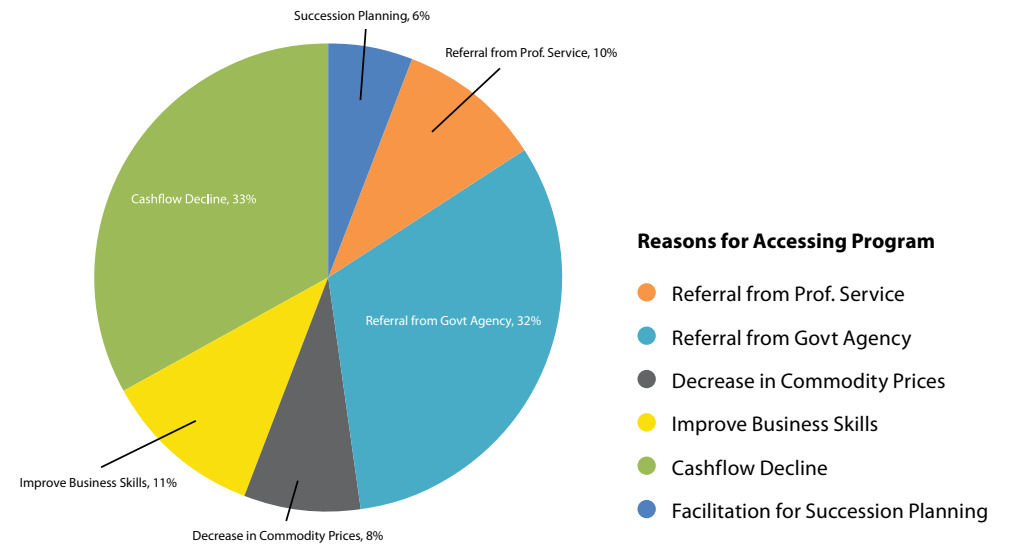
Active RFCS Clients



RFCS Client Breakdown by Industry

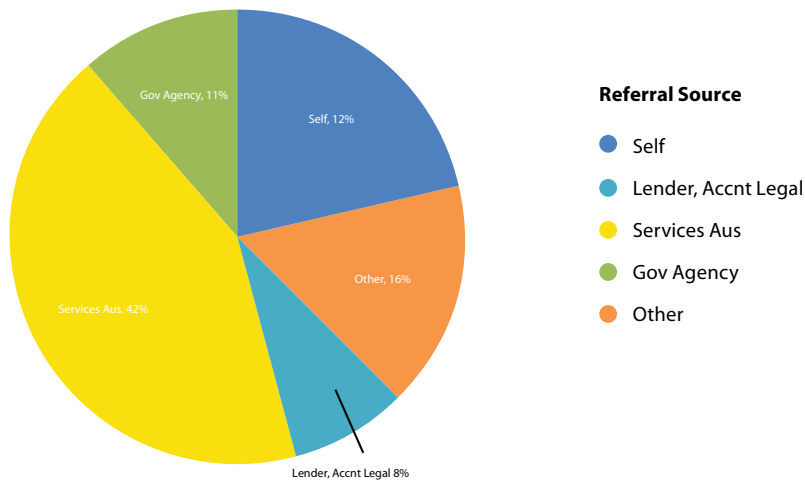


Reason for Accessing Service



Client Referral Source

2023



▲ Counsellor Engagement

Clients in general are now assessed in one of two ways:

▲ TRANSACTIONAL

Can be either complex or non-complex e.g. assist client with a loan application (complex) or assist with grant application (non-complex)

▲ CASE MANAGED CLIENT

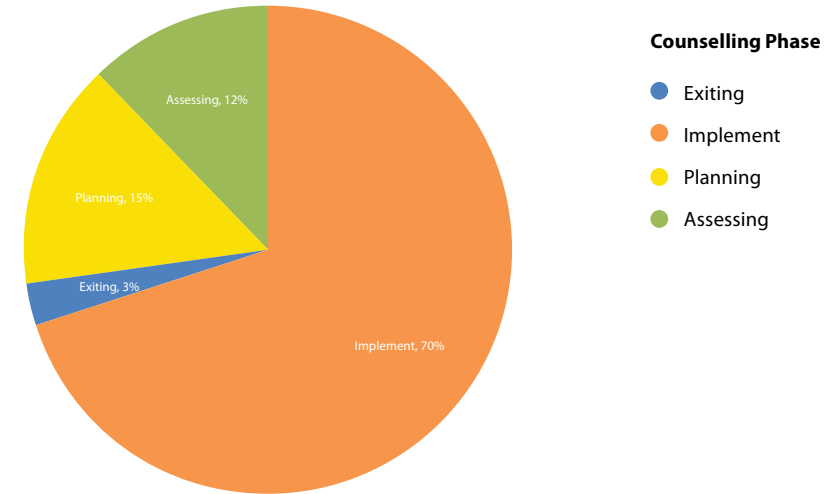
Holistic approach taken and client assisted in becoming financially resilient and self-sufficient through coaching and empowerment. Client is assisted with either succeeding, succession or exiting as required.

The bulk (over 95%) of our clients are considered as case managed clients

A case managed client is taken through various phases on their journey with Rural Business Tasmania and these phases are:

- ▲ Assessing
- ▲ Planning
- ▲ Implement and Monitor
- ▲ Exiting

Breakdown of RFCS Case Managed Client Counselling Phase



▲ Community Engagement and Referrals to External Partners in Times of Need

Our counsellors have worked alongside many varying industry partners and provided immediate on the ground assistance when natural disasters have impacted such as the flood event on the North West in late 2022.

The rural counselling team has also partnered with Services Australia and other government agencies for various roadshows and presentations across multiple towns throughout regional and rural Tasmania.

Our counsellors continue to regularly refer their clients to external parties in order to ensure that they are accessing all the necessary support and assistance they require in helping build their financial resilience.

A strong focus is to assist clients in accessing support around mental and emotional well-being, and so our counsellors regularly refer clients to various social support groups/organisations such as Rural Alive & Well or our new program around increasing adult literacy and numeracy skills – 26 TEN and or their medical practitioner.

▲ Regional Small Business Support Program

▲ Overview

Rural Business Tasmania's Regional Small Business Support Program assisted regional and rural small business enterprises that were either under financial hardship or had the potential to be under financial hardship.

The focus of the program was to assist business to:

- ▲ Better understand their financial position and options moving forward
- ▲ Develop self-reliance and enhance business viability
- ▲ Access assistance measures as required.

This program was in operation from February 2020 until June 2023 with funding provided by the federal government.

This program whilst being able to provide support to any small business across the state, focussed on business's located greater than 20 kilometres from Hobart or Launceston, noting businesses within this 20km area were still eligible for support.

▲ Client Focused Outcomes

The programs key areas of focus and client assistance included:

- ▲ Understanding the businesses current financial position
- ▲ Identifying options and implementing plans to improve the viability of the business enterprise
- ▲ Understanding the benefits and drawbacks of different options to manage financial issues
- ▲ Developing budgets and cash flow management
- ▲ Negotiating with creditors and financial providers on behalf of clients
- ▲ Understanding their rights and how to access broader professional advice and support services
- ▲ Accessing government and community grants, programs or schemes

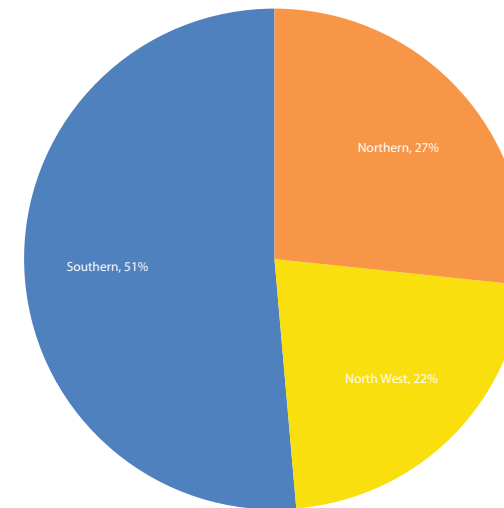
▲ Statewide Coverage

The Small Business Team service greater Tasmania as follows:

- ▲ North West
- ▲ North/North East
- ▲ Southern

The program has been accessed by small business across all regions of Tasmania, with the exception of the Bass Strait Islands.

Active Clients by Region



The strongest demand by location has been Southern Tasmania with the Glamorgan Spring Bay, Sorell and Tasman Peninsula Local Government Authorities seeing highest demand.



▲ Profile of a typical client assisted

A typical regional small business program support client resides in a regional town of less than 5,000 people situated on the south east coast of Tasmania.

The business will provide food and or accommodation services and has 2.5 employees including the owner.

The business has typically been in operation for 6.5 years with an average turnover in the preceding 12 months of \$178,000

The client would have presented seeking assistance due to the business either not covering expenses or covering expenses but not making a profit.

The business will not have a business plan or cash flow budget.

It should be noted that only 20% of businesses assisted to date, actually have actually had a business plan prior to seeking our help.

Assistance will be typically sought for:

- ▲ Diversifying the business (products/services, customer base)
- ▲ Forecasting cash flow and managing day-to-day finances
- ▲ Promotion/marketing – e.g., establish a digital presence (Website, Facebook etc.)

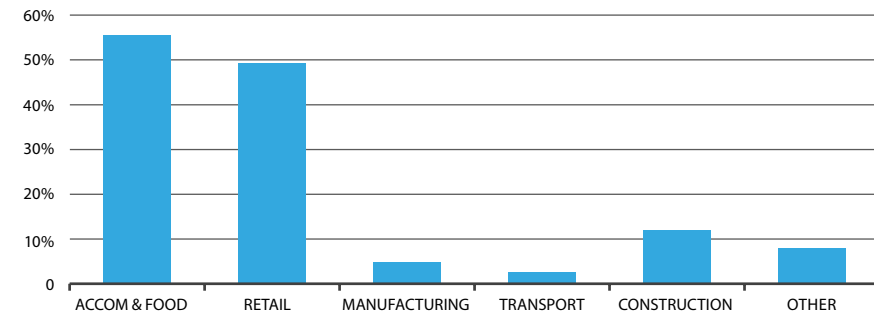


▲ Assistance Provided

During the program clients from a range of industries in Tasmania were supported.

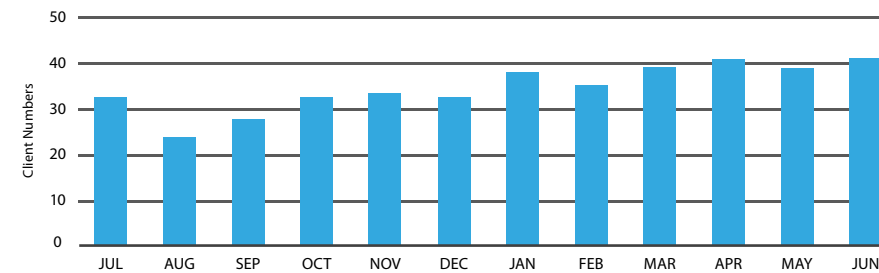
Industry Assistance by Type

YTD Basis



Active Clients Rolling

12 Month Basis



Business Development

In July 2023, Rural Business Tasmania were advised of a successful tender to deliver advisory services as part of the Tasmanian Business Advice Service and the New Business Support Pilot Program.

The Tasmanian Business Advice Service is a network of independent advisors funded by the Tasmanian Government to provide free advice and guidance to Tasmanian small businesses.

The two new advice services commenced on 2 October 2023.

▲ Rural Business Programs

Our business programs team has been quite busy over the past 12 months delivering multiple activities across wider Tasmania.

Active Programs for 2023 include:

- ▲ 26 TEN Adult Numeracy & Literacy Program
- ▲ ENABLE Learning & Extension skills development program in partnership with the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA)
- ▲ New Drought Risk Assessment Toolkit Project in partnership with the Derwent Catchment Project
- ▲ Cadetship Program
- ▲ Mentorship Program
- ▲ Business Resilience Workshops for flood & bushfire prone regions.

Our business programs are designed to support and develop both the skillset and knowledge base of Tasmanian regional and rural communities and primary producers alike through innovative programs.

Our programs are funded through Federal and State Government funding, commercial support from regional and rural Tasmanian businesses and/or program participants.

26TEN Adult Numeracy, Literacy & Digital Literacy Skills Development Program

Approved in May 2022 and funded by the Tasmanian State Government, the 26TEN program is a pilot program designed to provide in-home support in the areas of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy in rural and regional communities.

The pilot operated in Northern Tasmania with participants accessing up to 15 hours of one-on-one in-home support conducted by an Adult Literacy Skills Officer. This concluded in April 2023.

Due to limited take up from the community the program has been re-evaluated and redesigned with a greater focus on the awareness and promotion of the program built into the delivery.

ENABLE – Nurturing Agri Business Learning and Extension

This is a joint project between Rural Business Tasmania, the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture and the Australian Government Community Grants - Ag Up Program.

▲ Rural Business Programs

Students participate in a mixture of face to face and on-line lessons over a six month period.

Eighteen students are enrolled in the 2023 class and come from a diverse base of both locations and industries across the majority of regions in Tasmania from Huonville in the South to Burnie in the North West and Derby in the North East of Tasmania.

The students enrolled are primarily managers of medium to large farming enterprises or early-career extension officers.

This program is proudly sponsored by the Tas Farm Innovation Hub, and we at Rural Business Tasmania wish to both acknowledge and thank the Hub for the invaluable support in delivering this program.

Total value of this program is over \$500,000 (including in-kind support) Program funding is in place until June 2025 – subject to enrolment targets being met.

Positive feedback has been received from both students and employers such as:

“Pleasing to receive actual training that I can implement tomorrow on the farm”

“I have used the training to spring dad into action at long last”

Drought Risk Assessment Toolkit (DRA)

This program is funded by the Tas Farm Innovation Hub and is delivered in partnership with The Derwent Catchment Project.

Pleasingly, this project was highlighted in the recent Federal Government Productivity Commission Report as an example of a targeted value for money project being delivered as part of the Drought Hub community funded projects.

The project aim is to develop a simple assessment tool for farmers and landowners to identify how vulnerable they are to the impacts of drought.

This project is explicitly working to address accessibility issues for the farming community that are not operating in the top 20% of producers.

The assessment and scorecard will provide the farmer with a risk rating and pathways to increase their preparedness for future droughts.

This project will pilot a regionally tailored drought resilience approach which can be rolled out as an extension model through other not-for-profit groups working across the agriculture sector.

▲ Rural Business Programs

The project consists of four major stages:

- ▲ Audit and gap analysis (sense testing) of existing drought assessment materials
- ▲ Develop the drought risk assessment and score card based on the audit outcomes and featuring seven identified key drivers
- ▲ Undertake trial to seek feedback from the rural community around usage of developed tool.
- ▲ Report findings and adjust toolkit for final submission to the Hub.

As at time of writing stage three (trial) is in progress, with the program fully on track to be delivered both on time and on budget.

Building Resilience Workshops

Our Building Resilience Workshops, funded by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) are designed to support local communities within fire and flood prone local government areas to build resilience.

Key objectives are to help both individuals and small businesses to:

- ▲ Develop appropriate risk management strategies
- ▲ Develop and create disaster recovery plans
- ▲ Build financial resilience

Three key LGAs were identified and hosted workshops for the first round, over March 2023 being:

- ▲ Huon
- ▲ Tasman
- ▲ Break O'Day
- ▲ Gunns Plains
- ▲ Deloraine
- ▲ Latrobe

These workshops actively encourage participation from local emergency service providers. Each event also looks to engage a local key speaker with relevant background to draw interest from the communities. Participation and attendance at these events is sought from other support agencies.

▲ Rural Business Programs

Agribusiness Careers Pathway (ACP) Program (Cadetship Program)

Our Cadetship Program or our Agribusiness Career Pathways (ACP) Program aims to create a link between formal school learning packages and the practical learning through apprenticeships and traineeships. The program's key focus is to increase the uptake of traineeships in the agricultural sector.

Through the program cadets will undertake one to two days per week work experience for a placement of up to 12 weeks.

The project aims to:

- ▲ Develop a pool of 'Trainee Ready' businesses prepared to take on a trainee or apprentice.
- ▲ Conduct workshops to prepare businesses on requirements, governance & communication skills needed to take on a trainee or apprentice.
- ▲ Conduct 'Job Ready' workshops for students wishing to enter into an agricultural traineeship or apprenticeship.
- ▲ Place 'Job Ready' Cadets into traineeship or apprenticeship with 'Trainee Ready' businesses.
- ▲ Build the understanding within the agricultural industry around the requirements on how to take on the trainees, build a larger understanding around what are the barriers to large and small businesses within the Ag sector in taking on a trainee or apprentice.

Our 2023 program has seen twelve students enrol following engagement and promotional activities across multiple schools in Northern Tasmania along with Huonville High seeking involvement following positive word of mouth feedback.

Students will commence their work placement in September / October 2023.



▲ Rural Business Programs

Mentorship Program

Our 2023 program launched in May 2023 and now has 28 mentees and mentors enrolled.

The Mentorship program is designed to support the Ag workforce and new entrants to the industry by pairing them with mentors that are current leaders in a range of fields.

The Program aims to harness the capacity of experienced primary producers/industry leaders to support the growth and development of new or young farmers and industry participants e.g. extension officers and advisors.

The project will leverage the experience and skill that currently exists within the industry

Projected industry outcomes include:

- ▲ Assist in creating growth in the mentee's enterprise
- ▲ Increase development of relationships within the industry
- ▲ Greater involvement and sharing of information/knowledge
- ▲ Develop a network of trained mentors that can be engaged within the industry

Upcoming Business Development Opportunities

The Business Programs team continues to be on the lookout for new and exciting opportunities that align with Rural Business Tasmania's core values.

Programs to be delivered in 2023/2024 include:

- ▲ Community Impact Program as part of the Future Drought Fund program
 - ▲ Lead agency for program delivery in Northern Tasmania
 - ▲ Local community volunteer development program
 - ▲ Small Business Development Program Partnership with the Tasmanian Small Business Council.

▲ Forum of Rural Stakeholders

The 'The Forum of Rural Stakeholders' Group, convened by Rural Business Tasmania Inc, includes members of like-minded services and individuals who have a stake in our rural communities. Community organisations, education providers, government businesses and departments, peak industry groups and service providers have an opportunity to share knowledge and discuss emerging issues at these meetings.

The Forum facilitates discussions to assist service providers, ensuring there is an integrated and coordinated approach to the provision of services in rural communities and farming families. It also identifies recommendations that can be taken to improve the economic and social well-being of the rural and regional communities. We would like to thank Department of Natural Resources and Environment of Tasmania for hosting and providing catering throughout the year.

Guest Speakers included:

- ▲ Hon. Jo Palmer, Minister for Primary Industries and Water
- ▲ Hans van Pelt, Affairs of State
- ▲ Brett Charlton, DSV Transport and Logistics
- ▲ Trish Scholwin, 26TEN

Current members include:

- ▲ Rural Business Tasmania
- ▲ Rural Youth Organisation of Tasmania
- ▲ Country Women's Association
- ▲ Department of State Growth
- ▲ Department of Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas)
- ▲ Fruit Growers Tasmania
- ▲ Local Govt. Assoc. of Tasmania
- ▲ National Emergency Management Agency
- ▲ Natural Resource Management North (NRM North)
- ▲ Natural Resource Management South (NRM South)
- ▲ Poppy Growers Tasmania Inc.
- ▲ Primary Employers Tasmania
- ▲ Regional Development Australia Tasmania (RDA)
- ▲ Rural Alive and Well
- ▲ Safe Farming
- ▲ Services Australia (Centrelink)
- ▲ SES Tasmania
- ▲ Sprout Tasmania
- ▲ Tas Farm Innovation Hub
- ▲ Tasmanian Agricultural Productivity Group (TAPG)
- ▲ Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers
- ▲ Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture
- ▲ Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council
- ▲ Tasmanian Small Business Council
- ▲ Tasmanian Women in Agriculture
- ▲ TasTAFE
- ▲ University of Tasmania

▲ Engagement and Networks

During the twelve months, Rural Business Tasmania Board and team members attended many events, industry forums, meetings and interacted with many stakeholders.

Rural Business Tasmania has engaged with:

- ▲ Primary producers in our region including bee, sheep, wool, grains, dairy, poultry, and other intensive animal industries, viticulture, fishers and horticulture.
- ▲ Small businesses in rural and regional Tasmania.
- ▲ Regional Small/Medium Entities.
- ▲ Local government authorities.
- ▲ Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- ▲ Federal and State Government departments and agencies (eg Service Tasmania, Centrelink)
- ▲ Farmer's and fishery organisations including: Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, Poppy Growers Tasmania, Tasmania Seafood Industry Council, Rock Lobster Association, Tasmanian Fruit Growers Association.
- ▲ Rural Youth Tasmania.
- ▲ Rural industries representative bodies: water authorities, milk processors, co-ops.
- ▲ Service providers and local community services: Country Women's Association, Tasmanian Women in Agriculture, Salvation Army, Rural Alive and Well, Relationships Australia - Tasmania, churches, community health organisations, relief agencies.
- ▲ Professionals: accountants, lawyers, rural consultants.
- ▲ Indigenous and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community.
- ▲ Banks and other lending institutions.

Government, Industry & Business

This included high level government discussion, industry collaboration, information sharing, outreach for programs, business development and general stakeholder engagement. We have a broad audience and were able to engage extensively with them, including:

- ▲ Hon Michael Ferguson
- ▲ Sen. Helen Polley
- ▲ David Littleproud MP
- ▲ Janie Finlay MP
- ▲ Minister Jo Palmer
- ▲ Senator Wendy Askew
- ▲ Senator Jonno Duniam
- ▲ Gavin Pearce MP
- ▲ Senator Tony Sheldon
- ▲ David Barlett
- ▲ Hannah Moloney
- ▲ Peter Voller (Cradle Coast Authority)
- ▲ Catherine Murdoch (NRE Tas)
- ▲ Anglicare
- ▲ Troy Robbins (Tas TAFE)
- ▲ Naomi Walsh (UTAS)
- ▲ Karen Robinson (Rural Youth Tasmania)
- ▲ Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council
- ▲ Mike Rose, Tas Institute of Agriculture
- ▲ Tasmanian Small Business Council
- ▲ 26TEN
- ▲ Murdoch Clarke Mortgage Fund
- ▲ Australian Financial Counsellors Association
- ▲ Primary Employers Tasmania
- ▲ Regional Development Australia (RDA)
- ▲ Tasmanian Community Fund
- ▲ Country Women's Association

Government, Industry & Business:

- ▲ Department of State Growth
- ▲ Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- ▲ Local Govt. Assoc. of Tasmania
- ▲ NRM North
- ▲ NRM South
- ▲ Poppy Growers of Tasmania
- ▲ Safe Farming
- ▲ Tasmanian Women in Agriculture
- ▲ ANZ Bank
- ▲ Fruit Growers Tasmania
- ▲ Seed lab
- ▲ Sprout Tasmania
- ▲ Tas Farm Innovation Hub
- ▲ Tasmanian Agricultural Productivity Group
- ▲ Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association
- ▲ Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture
- ▲ TasTAFE
- ▲ Regional Investment Corporation
- ▲ University of Tasmania
- ▲ Services Australia
- ▲ Dairy Tasmania
- ▲ State Emergency Service Tasmania
- ▲ National Emergency Management Agency
- ▲ MAS National
- ▲ Rural Biz Training

Activities Undertaken:

Regular meetings attended:

- ▲ Agricultural Co-ordination Group (Tas Government and industry)
- ▲ National Executive Officers Meeting – RFCS Network and service providers
- ▲ UTAS – Tas Farm Innovation Hub (as Partner and Steering Committee member)
- ▲ OCCC Meeting – Economic Regulator
- ▲ RDA Regional Intelligence Sharing sessions
- ▲ Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia
- ▲ Resilience Program Collaboration Group (Future Drought Fund)

Presentations were made:

- ▲ Forum of Rural Stakeholders
- ▲ Building Resilient Communities Workshops
- ▲ 2023 Science to Practice Forum
- ▲ NRM Norths Floodplain Fencing Workshop
- ▲ Lions Club of Westbury, Tasmania meeting
- ▲ St Helens RAW/Tasmanian Seafood Industry Event

Events attended:

- ▲ Ag Innovation Expo
- ▲ Agfest x2
- ▲ National Alliance for Regionalisation Annual Meeting
- ▲ National Small Business Summit
- ▲ Powered by Tasmania Dinner
- ▲ Mentorship Dinner
- ▲ Chartered Accountants Celebration Dinner
- ▲ Jobs and Skills Summit
- ▲ Women in Tasmania Launch Event
- ▲ Launch of Strategic Regional Plan for Tas 2023
- ▲ Red Hot Summer Tour (VIP event with Buckby Motors)
- ▲ RFCS Chairs and EOs Conference
- ▲ Old Mates Day
- ▲ Run for Rural Relief
- ▲ Financial Counselling Australia Conference
- ▲ Deloraine Flood Recovery Day
- ▲ Huon Valley Council Storm Recovery Drop-in Session

▲ Corporate Services

The Corporate Services team have continued to provide service support that ensure we meet the financial and administrative commitments, to sustain effective delivery of our programs and ongoing positive relationships with our partners.

Finance and Admin

RBT has continued to build and manage its workforce and provide resources necessary to ensure it delivers requirements of all grant deeds that it operates under. The appointment of Michelle Williams as Head of Finance and Admin, supported by Karen Hinds and Kate Cox has enabled ongoing resourcing of this function.

Thank you

We would like to thank Ian Dickinson for his mentoring and support over the past 12 months with the Finance Team.

We thank Buckby Motors for their continued support in supply of motor vehicles for the organisation.

Compliance

Rural Business Tasmania has complied with all reporting requirements including the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission and the Australian Taxation Office.

The Board's sub-committees continue, in conjunction with Executive Management and Corporate Services, to oversee and complete periodic reviews of all policies and procedures, and financial reporting to ensure that Rural Business Tasmania is at the forefront of its compliance and regulatory responsibilities.

HR

A restructure of the business was undertaken to meet the continued growth of the organisation.

Renewal of contracts for the team, and general compliance with Human Resource Laws, remains a focus this year. Thank you again to Tess Moore and Andrew Cameron for their ongoing assistance and expertise in this area.

Staff movements during the year

Farewell

We would like to thank Tim Hickey, Rhett McKenzie-Edwards, John Dunbar, Lovisa Stagoll and Joanne McCullagh for their time at Rural Business and wish them every success in the future.

IT

An upgrade of our Client Relationship Management System has been completed, to ensure that we are able to capture key elements of our 2021-2024 counselling program and Small Business Program.

Thank you

We would like to acknowledge the work completed by Stephen Avery and his expertise and support in completing the upgrade of CRM.

Corporate Services Team

Corporate Services Team provide critical business support to all aspects of the operations including;

- ▲ Administrative Support
- ▲ Financial Administration
- ▲ Processing Payroll
- ▲ Human resources assistance to the CEO
- ▲ Accounts payable and receivable
- ▲ Managing IT issues with the help of Beyond IT
- ▲ Vehicle fleet oversight
- ▲ Asset requisition and disposal
- ▲ Compliance and oversight of statutory reporting to regulatory bodies
- ▲ Policy review and oversight
- ▲ Administrative support to board sub-committees

This year has been a year of growth and restructure where we have strived to meet and exceed the goals and expectations of the business. It is with great anticipation that the Corporate Services Team look forward to 2023-2024.

▲ Funding and Sponsorship

Rural Business Tasmania thank our Funding Partners and Sponsors for their support

Funding Partners:

Rural Business Tasmania thanks and acknowledges, as our main source of revenue, the critical financial support received from Australian and Tasmanian Government agencies including:

- ▲ Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (DAFF – Australia)
- ▲ Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE – Tasmania)
- ▲ Department of State Growth

In-kind and Financial Sponsors:

We thank and acknowledge the support of our sponsors including:

- ▲ Rural Youth Organisation of Tasmania Inc. – Launceston office facilities
- ▲ Royal Agricultural Society of Tasmania – Hobart office facilities
- ▲ Devonport Agricultural and Pastoral Society – Devonport office facilities
- ▲ Ozerentals – Hobart Office facilities in kind discount \$2,500

Founding Body:

- ▲ Rural Youth Tasmania



▲ Fundraising Event

Run for Rural Relief

On the 22nd January, 2023 the “Run for Rural Relief” event was held to raise funds for primary producers and small businesses affected by the Tasmanian floods in October 2022.

Nicholas Coleman from the Devonport area contacted Rural Business Tasmania with the idea to do a fun run to raise money. He had been looking for a charity to partner with to ensure funds raised would go directly to those impacted. A PayPal campaign page was set up with a fundraising goal of \$5,000 and was promoted via radio, newspaper and social media.

After months of training Nicholas completed the 68km run (a new PB) in the Devonport/Latrobe area, with the Start/Finish line at the Devonport Bluff. Nicholas was supported by fellow runners, cyclists and spectators along the way. Nicholas started the run at 7am and completed the 68kms just before 3pm which was ahead of his goal time.

Baptcare provided a company car and drivers which offered runners and riders support along the way, including food and drink stops. Rural Business Tasmania also provided a car and drivers to alert traffic of runners on the road, as well as offering encouragement and support. A marquee was set up at the Start/Finish line and manned by our team.

Nicholas was supported by the following sponsors:

- ▲ Tarkine Running - Clothing and giveaways
- ▲ Reves Energy Strips
- ▲ Steigen Socks
- ▲ Tasmanian Sports & Coaching Collective (TASSACC)
- ▲ Tidepool Design

The original fundraising goal was exceeded and reached \$6,000 after the event. These funds were disbursed to those in need through the Rural Relief Fund.

We would like to thank Nicholas for his commitment and dedication in creating this memorable fundraising event, and for his continued support of Rural Business Tasmania.



▲ Treasurer's Report

On behalf of the Board, I am pleased to provide an overview of the Organisation's financial activities and audited financial statements for the 22/23 financial year.

This is my first Treasurer's report and before giving my report I would like to acknowledge the past contribution of Mr. Keith Rice as Treasurer and thank him for his help with the transition.

After a challenging year, as most businesses would attest, Rural Business Tasmania has been able to maintain a financial position similar to that of 21/22. However, with our clients still facing the challenges of higher business input costs, interest rates and demand and supply issues, we must continue to be diligent with our advice delivery so that our clients are sufficiently equipped to deal with these challenges.

Our gross income for 22/23 was \$1.529M (21/22 \$1.729M) while overall operating expenses were \$1.532M (21/22 \$1.652M), resulting in a small but containable net deficit of \$2,929. While not comparable to the surplus of 21/22 (\$77,252), the deficit has enabled Rural Business Tasmania to retain its level of reserves similar to that of the previous year (22/23 \$335,866, 21/22 \$338,799).

We are a not-for-profit organisation, however it is important that we generate a small surplus each year to enable us to provide good quality service delivery to our rural and regional community clients. A positive income also ensures that we maintain our financial position in order to meet the challenges of our own business model. Overall, the 22/23 operating result has enabled RBT to remain financially sound going forward. A 22/23 deficit was budgeted for however the actual result was smaller than that budgeted.

As Treasurer it is important that I acknowledge the staff and Board for providing such a solid financial foundation. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of my fellow Finance Committee members who have ably assisted with overseeing our financial position.

Financial Reporting

To ensure financial governance remains at the highest level, financial reporting is provided to the Board on a bi-monthly basis. Reports include the Profit and Loss Statement, Balance Sheet and Operating Statement including a detailed overview of the financial situation. The financial performance against budget is discussed and our financial strategy is a continuing priority.

Audit of Accounts and Compliance

The audit report for the 22/23 year has been completed utilising general purpose financial statements methodology.

All compliance with funding bodies, taxation, superannuation and Australian Charities of Not for Profit Commission (ACNC) has been met for the financial year.

A complete set of audited financial statements is available upon request by emailing finance finance@ruralbusinessstasmania.org.au.

Summary

Although challenges remain in the SME and large business sector, I am sure that our Board together with our professional staff will address these challenges to provide excellent support to our clients and stakeholders.

In closing I wish to thank the Board and staff for their generous support over the last twelve months.



Christopher Bishop

Treasurer



▲ Summary Statement of Profit & Loss

Revenue	2023	2022
Rural Financial Counselling Service	\$647,061	\$691,186
Small Business Support Program	\$348,788	\$356,283
Other Programs	\$353,892	\$345,787
Business and Service Fees	\$44,684	\$32,782
Grants - SBSP PSF & FCRP	\$25,862	\$247,833
Participants Fees	\$32,500	-
In Kind Support	\$27,296	\$33,100
Other Revenue	\$49,116	\$22,131
Total Revenue	\$1,529,199	\$1,729,102

Expenses	2023	2022
Employee Expenses	\$1,025,429	\$1,023,909
Property and Occupancy costs	\$58,294	\$59,293
Administration & Other Expenses	\$192,061	\$190,017
Workshop costs	\$73,175	\$523
Grants paid - FCRP & SBSP PSF	\$25,862	\$247,833
Marketing and promotion	\$23,158	\$25,146
Vehicle and Travel Costs	\$71,046	\$57,006
Insurance Expenses	\$29,292	\$17,175
Communications & IT costs	\$44,104	\$49,820
Total Expenditure	\$1,542,421	\$1,670,722

Operating Surplus/(Deficit)	\$-13,222	\$58,380
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Rural Relief Fund	2023	2022
Donations Received	\$19,642	\$18,862
Administration Grants Received	\$4,221	\$8,270
Grants Paid	-13,570	-8,270
Net Rural Relief Fund Activities	\$10,293	\$18,862

Net Surplus/(Deficit)	\$-2,929	\$77,242
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Rural Business Tasmania

*Supporting and Growing
Rural and Regional Enterprises*



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