

Local disaster resilience resource shared with drought effected community.

On November 7, Gateway Family Services ran a 1 day disaster resilience workshop for workers at Upper Hunter Community Services (UHCS) in Muswellbrook NSW. The workshop was centred on Gateway's online disaster resilience tool *Walk With* which was launched on October 29 in Springwood. *Walk With* prepares and supports community services to deliver the vital practical and emotional support that people need during and after disaster. The workshop was made possible through a grant from Blue Mountains Bendigo Bank.

Staff at UHCS shared some of the challenges and rewards of supporting their community. Some spoke of 'sparkling moments' where they were able to make a small but significant difference to people coping with the impacts of the ongoing drought. One such 'sparkling moment' included assisting a young client to get her hair professionally done for her school formal. This was an additional expense that her family could not spare as they struggled to buy feed for their livestock. As one of the workers at UHCS shared "it's the small things that help to make a real difference to people's hope and resilience".

Walk With workshop facilitator Anne Crestani said, "The time we spent with the amazing staff at UHCS reaffirmed the vital role of place based community organisations in supporting people who are coping with the impacts of disaster, such as the NSW drought. They have first-hand knowledge and personal experience of what people are up against because they are so embedded in their community. Workers told us that when the media spotlight eventually moves on to the next disaster, they will still be there for the long haul, working hard for their community. Gateway is very grateful to Blue Mountains Bendigo Bank for helping us to connect with and support our rural community service colleagues".

To find out more about the *Walk With* resource go to www.gatewayfamilyservices.org.au



From left to right: Rebecca Eveleigh (Upper Hunter Community Services), Anne Crestani (Gateway), Janelle Eades, Skye Bennett, Michelle Owen (Upper Hunter Community Services), Joanna Brown (Gateway).