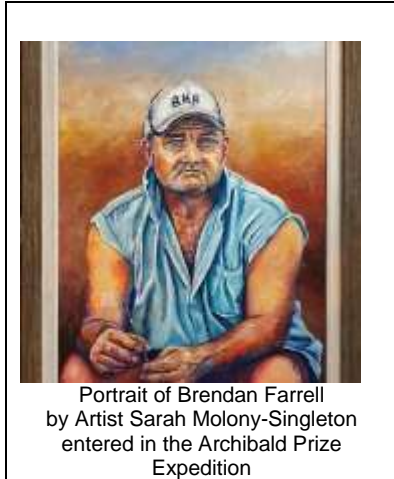




The Burrumbuttock Hay Runners (BHR) and the Rotary Club of Sydney (RCS) continue to support rural communities in NSW, Queensland and Victoria.

Drought, fire and floods - supporting farmers and rural communities



Portrait of Brendan Farrell by Artist Sarah Molony-Singleton entered in the Archibald Prize Expedition

Drought

In early 2014 Brendan ‘Bumpa’ Farrell heard about a farmer in Bourke NSW who was struggling in the drought; he contacted the farmer and offered to bring a truckload of hay to help him out. The BHR was born. More hay was donated. Donations were sought to pay for fuel to move the donated hay and to support drought affected farmers.

The Rotary Club of Sydney Rural Community Support Programme (RCSP) also started in 2014 (at the time simply called the Drought Appeal) when the RCS was asked to manage the donated money for the BHR. This Programme has enabled the Club to continue to do what it has always done: partner with others in the community in Achieving for Others*.

Money is raised and spent in partnership with other organisations; our major partner is the Burrumbuttock Hay Runners. (*Brian Fletcher *The Rotary Club of Sydney 1921-2005 Achieving for Others*).

In 2014 members of the RCS thought they were engaged in another one off action where the RCS could help out by managing \$50,000 of donations to move some hay to feed drought affected livestock. They did not think that some 8 years later, at the time of writing, and with approximately \$10 million donated, they would still be supporting rural communities.

Cash donations are only part of the financial support; people and businesses have donated machinery, trucks, showgrounds, food, BBQs and of course their time. For volunteer drivers and supporters the Hay Runs are not just about delivering supplies, but about looking after the mental health of struggling farmers. Personal contact saves lives in country areas. Sometimes the events that raise money are themselves as important to the health of rural communities as the money raised.

To date in 2022 since the first delivery to Bourke there have been 15 major Hay Runs each involving around 200 trucks; many prime movers towing two semitrailers. In addition there are many ‘mini’ runs to farmers in need.

Major Hay Runs involve coordination with State and local governments, management at showgrounds and other facilities that can park 200 trucks and many trailers as well as police and transport authorities in 3 states. A free family concert at the end of a hay run brings drivers, farmers, rural communities and supporters together.



The RCS acknowledges the inspiring leadership and hard work of Brendan Farrell, OAM without whom none of this would have happened or continued.

The programme has, of course, been interrupted by Covid but the 2023 major hay run is being planned.



Fire

BHRs met an urgent request in early January 2020 for 54 trucks to deliver hay, under escort from police and fire trucks, to Corryong & Sandy Creek in Victoria, to help feed breeding stock who survived the devastating fires in that area; only a small contribution in a national disaster but we were glad to be able to help.

Flood

We recall, ironically, that at the start of 2019 we sent 120 trucks loaded with hay to feed cattle and horses stranded on high ground following floods in NE Queensland.

Not Just Hay Runs



Over the last 8 years the Hay Runners and the Club have also assembled donations to back:

- The Western Division Resilient Landscapes Project in partnership with Soils for Life.
- Australian Rotary Health Mental Health First Aid Courses and Mental Health support for truck drivers.
- The Royal Flying Doctor Service.
- Hair and makeups artists working with remote students at the Longreach School of the Air musical production just as they do for city students. (see photo left)
- Muttaborra State School and the Muttaborra Amateur Swim Club (AKA Mudskippers) and the RCS was also one of the sponsors of a Bourke High School students' excursion to Japan.
- Christmas hampers for rural families in financial stress.
- Rural families going through difficult financial times, some needing a small helping hand and some requiring lifesaving surgery.