

# Aussie Helpers spread cheer to bush families

**T**HE staff at McConachie Stedman in Toowoomba have embraced the

Christmas spirit this year by donating goodies to Aussie Helpers to help provide a little festive cheer to rural families who are suffering the ongoing effects of the drought. The seven partners and 60 staff at the financial services firm have filled two enormous hampers, which currently take pride of place in the office reception area, with toys, bonbons, biscuits, lollies, drinks and other luxuries that Aussie Helpers will distribute to country families in need.

McConachie Stedman partner Mark Liesch said that a vast majority of the firm's clients are rural people, from farmers to rural businesses.

The firm celebrates its 60th anniversary servicing the Darling Downs region next year. Over the years McConachie Stedman has been committed to many charitable causes including Blood Bank, Shave for a Cure, Jeans for Genes and Big Morning Tea. This is the first year that they have been involved with Aussie Helpers and

Mr Liesch said the response to the call for donations has been great.

"People who aren't really shoppers have donated money for the purchase of items," he said.

"A lot of people are affected by the drought and Aussie Helpers are specifically there to help them. I don't see us ever shifting our focus from the rural area and if the drought continues, we will probably do this again."

Brian and Nerida Egan established Aussie Helpers in 2002 to help fight poverty and lift the spirits of those severely affected by drought in the outback. From what they saw around them and what they heard from people in the bush, Brian and Nerida felt that no organisation was doing anything significant to help families suffering the effects of the worst drought in history.

Aussie Helpers work around three words "care, share, respect" which simply means that Aussie Helpers care about people in need and will share whatever assistance they have available free of charge and will give the recipients the utmost respect and confidentiality.



McConachie Stedman's Bill Barrett, Kelly Powell, Jane Heidrich, and Myles Smith show off the large Christmas hampers filled with donations for their Aussie Helpers Christmas Appeal.