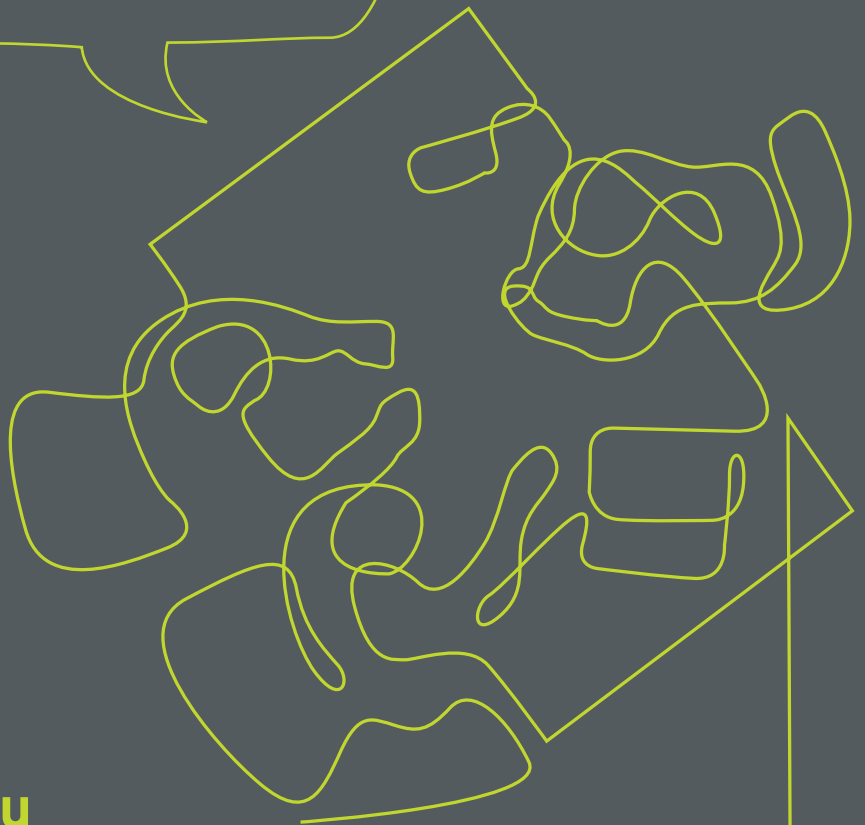


The **Murraylands** **and Riverland** **Plan**

This project is part of the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program and is funded through the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund and the Government of South Australia.



www.mrplan.com.au

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Introduction



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and pay respect to the past, present and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation.

We value their knowledge, wisdom, leadership and connection to Country and appreciate the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within, and outside of our region.

The process of developing the Murraylands and Riverland Plan (MR Plan) commenced through the Regional Drought Resilience Planning process, starting with a focus on building the resilience of the agriculture sector to the impacts of drought.

As community interviews and discussions grew, the scope grew, encompassing all elements of the regional ecosystem as we currently understand it – including the supporting and service industries to agriculture and its many communities, and considering the impacts of climate change from floods and storms to droughts, pandemic and other biosecurity risks, and changes in global financial and trade settings.

We now see that the system is connected. It is complex. We understand the system now better than when we started but the hero of this process remains agriculture, and the villain, drought. The impacts of drought on agriculture may well have been the ‘problem’ on which this process focused at the start, but we can now see that building resilience in and around our agricultural sector is at the heart of the ‘solution’ for our entire regional ecosystem.



Our approach to building resilience

For our region the issue of resilience is bigger than drought.

Our region has always suffered from drought, and climate change means that we are going to experience the impact of drought more often and the occurrences of drought will last longer and be more intense. In general terms our climate and soils will be hotter and drier.

Drought has been part of our lives for generations - we have had to be adaptable to the dry, we haven't been able to rely on regular or significant rainfall. Over time agriculture has become highly efficient at using water and other inputs. The industries our region was built on are now as efficient as they can be.

If the last two years of a pandemic have taught us anything, it is that in addition to drought, we are likely to experience many challenges over the next 10-20 years, some of which will be predictable and many of which won't.

We expect that we will experience:

- **Impacts from climate change including -**
 - o Less rainfall - increased drought
 - o Floods/ more unusual rainfall events
 - o Harsher conditions for fire
- **COVID19 and future pandemics** currently unknown
- **Sudden changes to supply chains**
- **Sudden and unexpected widespread loss of export opportunities** - like what has happened with China in the last two years
- **Disease** - that threatens the agricultural industry, impacts, or destroys crops

As a region we need to ensure that our communities, our industries, and our landscapes are resilient to cope with whatever comes at us. We need to choose a pathway that is resilient.

Therefore, we have approached our drought resilience planning differently.

We have taken a holistic approach to our analysis, focusing on our region's systems - how their constituent parts interrelate and how our system works over time within the context of larger systems. We have quite deliberately explored the systems that make our region 'from the ground up', with a view to converting the 'unknowns' to 'knowns'.¹

To do this we have been guided by the community, activating a ground up approach which has sought to understand what the diversity of individuals and communities in the region believe **their** strengths and weaknesses are; what they need to make them as resilient as they can be.

“...communities are best placed to frame their resilience, collectively and from a ‘systems’ perspective...”

~ from the Tarnagulla Resilience Study²

¹ Pawson R, Wong G & Owen L (2011) 'Known Knowns, Known Unknowns, Unknown Unknowns: The Predicament of Evidence-Based Policy' *American Journal of Evaluation*, 32(4): 518-546

² Dr Mittul Vahanvati, "Unpacking the meaning of resilience", Australian Journal of Emergency Management, <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/ajem-january-2020-unpacking-the-meaning-of-resilience-the-tarnagulla-community-definition-comparing-to-the-literature/>



An Evidence Based Approach to Resilience Planning

An extensive process of engagement with community and regional stakeholders has underpinned the development of this Plan.

The engagement process was BIG involving approximately 550 people from the region and it was deep with a grand total of more than 4,080 hours of work dedicated by the community to developing this Plan!

The key elements of the engagement methodology used to develop this Plan were as follows:

1. Deep involvement from community using collective impact efforts³
2. Being conscious of the need to nurture trust in the Project Sponsor
3. Building on networks and working with communities where they are
4. Deliberative engagement - which emphasises the importance of spending time, reflection and being evidence based
5. Appreciative inquiry - that uses a positive/strengths-based approach⁴
6. Building enduring relationships between individuals and institutions that will contribute to ongoing regional resilience.⁵

In addition, the Project Team (MR Plan Steering Committee, Project Consultant, Project Lead and support staff) have been guided by systems thinking⁶, localism⁷ and presencing⁸.

To support the continuation of this planning process through to implementation, ongoing review and creative adaptation (an enduring process), the Project Team have engaged a team of experts in the fields of systems mapping, neuroscience and community engagement.

At its essence, the project approach seeks to understand the system well enough to be able to intelligently influence lasting change. This requires approaching regional drought resilience planning differently, noting Einstein's parable, "insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results".⁹

A detailed account of the engagement process undertaken to develop this Plan can be found at **Attachment A** and a breakdown on the number of participants at **Attachment B**.

³ Commonwealth of Australia (2017) 'Collective impact: Evidence and implications for practice' *CFCA Paper No. 45*.

⁴ Sasse T et al. (2021) 'Public engagement and net zero. How government should involve citizens in climate policy making'

⁵ MacKay H (2021) 'The Kindness Revolution'

⁶ Meadows D (2018) 'Thinking in Systems'

⁷ Cleary J & Hogan A (2016) 'Localism and decision-making in regional Australia: The power of people like us', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 48: 33-40

⁸ Scharmer C O (2018) 'The Essentials of Theory U: Core Principles and Applications'

⁹ Wilczek F (2015) 'Einstein's Parable of Quantum Insanity' Quanta Magazine, ScientificAmerican.com



OUR ENGAGEMENT STATISTICS



550 People Involved



28 Regional Interviews



52 Community Conversations

Involving more than 300 people



134 Regional Summit Participants

670 hours of work



240+ hours of Steering Committee Meetings

11 meetings x 11 people



2,700+ hours Regional Leaders and Interest Panels

58 participants



4,080+ hours (170 days) Work by the Community

Our Region

We are, always have been and always will be **strong and adaptable**.

We know that we gain strength and flexibility through **diversity and collaboration**.

The Region considered in the MR Plan is the Murraylands and Riverland of South Australia. The Mallee is an integral part of this region, along with the Murray River, Lower Lakes and Coorong.

We have a population of 73,000 residents. Whether it is diversity in our communities - diversity of age, diversity in lived experience, knowledge or cultural background, or even how long people have lived in the region - embracing this diversity will give us strength.

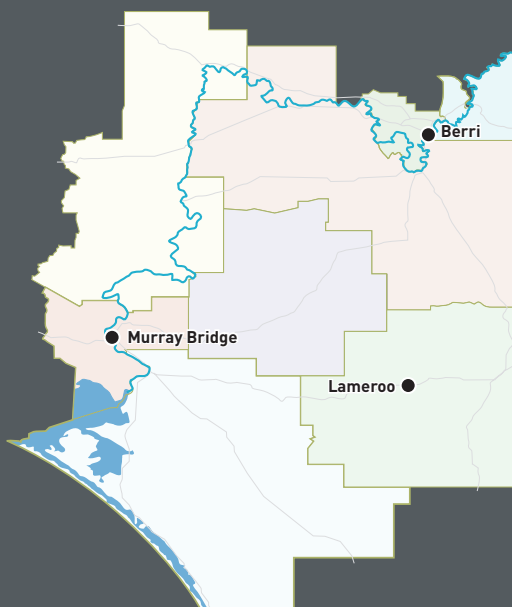
Equally, diversity in our industrial base is also vital. We have and always will be a centre for agriculture. In 2021, agriculture accounted for around 43% of regional businesses and 16.2%¹⁰ of the region's employment. We also know that agriculture in the region has a disproportionate impact on other sectors, with many of them (e.g., construction, health and education services, manufacturing, retail, transport) driven by supporting those in the agriculture sector. But we know this sector will be increasingly challenged as the ongoing effects of climate change continue to impact the conditions of our landscapes. To survive and prosper, we need to diversify, both within the agricultural sector and into other sectors.

Our strength and adaptability also comes from working together - sharing knowledge, building partnerships, and supporting other local businesses.

Most importantly our resilience is built by people in our community working together through positive collaboration. We want all members of the community to work in unison for our collective benefit.

We will gain strength through our connectivity to this place, lessons from the past and through being open to new opportunities in the future.

We know that diversity and connectivity will enable us to stand strong and adapt to whatever comes at us!



Murraylands Riverland Regions

Mid Murray
Council

Berri Barmera
Council

Renmark Paringa
Council

District Council of
Loxton Waikerie

Southern Mallee
District Council

Coorong District
Council

Rural City of
Murray Bridge

District Council of
Karoonda East Murray

¹⁰ <https://economy.id.com.au/rda-murraylands-riverland/employment-by-industry>

Climate Change and Drought

The science is clear.

Climate change is impacting our world, our country, our region and our communities. While drought has always been part of our regional existence, our challenges are compounding.

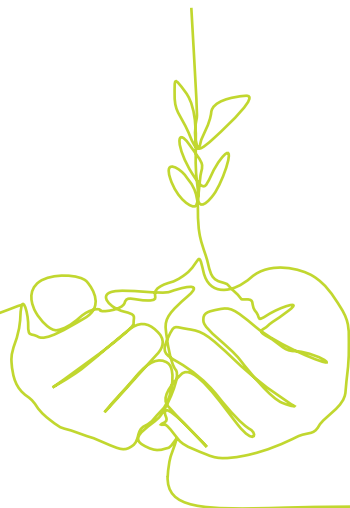
We can see it in our landscapes and other systems, such as food production, conditions for disease, frequency and severity of extreme events, risk mitigation and cost of insurance and increased health risks through heat exposure.

We know we will see continued decreases in rainfall and increases in temperature, increasing evapotranspiration and decreasing soil moisture, and runoff and streamflow will significantly decrease. We will experience high levels of natural variability, with extreme wet periods also possible. We know we will experience longer and more severe droughts.¹¹

The CSIRO reports that the Murraylands and Riverland region will experience ¹²:

- Increasing average temperatures in all seasons - there will be more hot days and fewer frosts.
- Less and more variable rainfall - when it comes, it is likely to be heavy and intense.
- Less rainfall in the Murray-Darling Basin will reduce water flow in the river, change the river ecology and impact on water prices. ABARES analysis suggests a 3% change in average rainfall results in a 17% increase in temporary water market prices in the southern Basin.¹³ This will also bring about ecological changes and challenges.
- Harsher conditions for fire - longer and more intense fire seasons.
- Increasing storms and destructive wind events.

We expect that climate change will place increased pressure on regional health services, many of which are already stretched. Our infrastructure may not be able to withstand extreme events or the long-term additional stresses from higher temperatures and climate variability. Such infrastructure may include road and bridge infrastructure in the face of greater levels of flooding; electricity supply and the communications infrastructure that relies on it because of more frequent and extreme heat waves and extreme weather events; or emergency services (predominantly volunteer-run services) responding to growing numbers and ranges of events.



Reduced rainfall and reduced river flows will affect all communities, and especially primary producers.

Tourism may be vulnerable to climate change if quality of life and natural amenity are compromised. These cumulative impacts, along with changes in labour markets, are likely to place additional stresses on communities and individuals' wellbeing. Evidence suggests that Basin communities including the Riverland towns of Waikerie, Renmark, Barmera, Berri, and Loxton are amongst the most vulnerable towns in Australia to climate change¹⁴.

"Covid has impacted our culture, we can't touch each other. It is human, we need to hug each other. We need to touch and connect with each other - we need human touch."

~ Interviewee, Loxton

"Droughts - not getting enough rain - this will have a huge impact on the farmers and the town. This will be the biggest issue they will face in the next 10-15 years."

~ Interviewee, Karoonda

"We have one good year in ten. Farmers plan for the future - they plan financially for disaster. They don't expect good years."

~ Interviewee, Loxton

¹¹ Commonwealth of Australia, 2020. Trends and historical conditions in the Murray-Darling Basin: A report prepared for the Murray-Darling Basin Authority by the Bureau of Meteorology

¹² CSIRO, "Climate Change in Australia" - <https://climatechangeinaustralia.gov.au/en/projections-tools/regional-climate-change-explorer/clusters/?current=MBC&tooltip=true&popup=true>

¹³ Independent Assessment of Social and Economic Conditions in the Murray Darling Basin, "Final Report: Independent assessment of social and economic conditions in the Murray-Darling Basin", pg 79, https://www.mdba.gov.au/sites/default/files/pubs/seftons-report-september-2020_0.pdf

¹⁴ Beer, A. et al., 2013. Australia's country towns 2050: What will a climate adapted settlement pattern look like?, Gold Coast: National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility.

Embedding the principles of resilience - what matters most

The Participants who developed this Plan recognised the need to embed resilience planning in the work and plans of institutions across the region - local government, government agencies, community services sector and industry.

Put simply, they wanted everyone to be working for the same common purpose.

They recognised that is best achieved by having a clear and common understanding of what needs to be focused on (the things that matter most), while allowing each agency, organisation or individual the ultimate flexibility to self-determine their own journey to these goals.

To this end - the Interest Panels recommended that four areas of focus (which were developed from the responses to Community Conversations) become the principles that organisations across the region use to help ensure that their work focuses on the regional priorities for building resilience.

THE PRIORITY PRINCIPLES FOR REGIONAL RESILIENCE

Together Community

Enable and support the development of a connected and inclusive community.

- Don't leave anyone behind
- Provide easy access to services and supports
- Apply place-based models to enable communities to develop and grow

Leadership in Action

Develop a system of leadership and nurture both formal and informal leaders in the region

- Leadership engages deeply with the community in shaping their futures
- Communities are respected and listened to
- Support leaders to grow, develop and connect to their communities
- Our leaders are empowered

Prepared & Proactive

Create a proactive, adaptive, and innovative system of planning for and leveraging disruption.

- Take a long-term strategic view to planning
- Planning focuses on both the reactive and the preventative.
- Planning is collaborative across sectors, is community driven, and evidence based

Productive & Collaborative Futures

Create the conditions for industry and business to thrive now and into the future by:

- Enabling improved collaboration, communication, and information availability
- Encouraging diversification of industry both across the region and within sectors
- Investing in business - to encourage innovation, inclusivity, and a future focus
- Promoting the region



Interpreting this Plan

A partnership of Regional Development Australia Murraylands and Riverland (RDAMR), Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board (MRLB) and Murraylands and Riverland Local Government Association (MRLGA) has led the development of this Plan through a process of collaboration and empowerment of the community and local stakeholders.

The **Priorities for Resilience Intervention and Action** were developed by community members and local stakeholders working together on Interest Panels using the feedback received through the Community Conversations. Hence, the recommendations are the work of the four Interest Panels.

The process for this is explained in **Attachment A**.

The section on **Priorities for Resilience Intervention and Action**, details the Interest Panel's recommendations under outcome-based themes. At the end of each outcome section the individual recommendations are summarised according to their complexity and their relative simplicity to action.

The six outcome themes were developed by democracyCo after the Interest Panels had completed their work. Strong themes and connections emerged across the Interest Panels as their work progressed.

It then made sense to bring together recommendations that were working towards similar outcomes and that functionally related to each other (even if they were from different Interest Panels). The six outcome themes were checked by Interest Panel participants as part of a draft review.

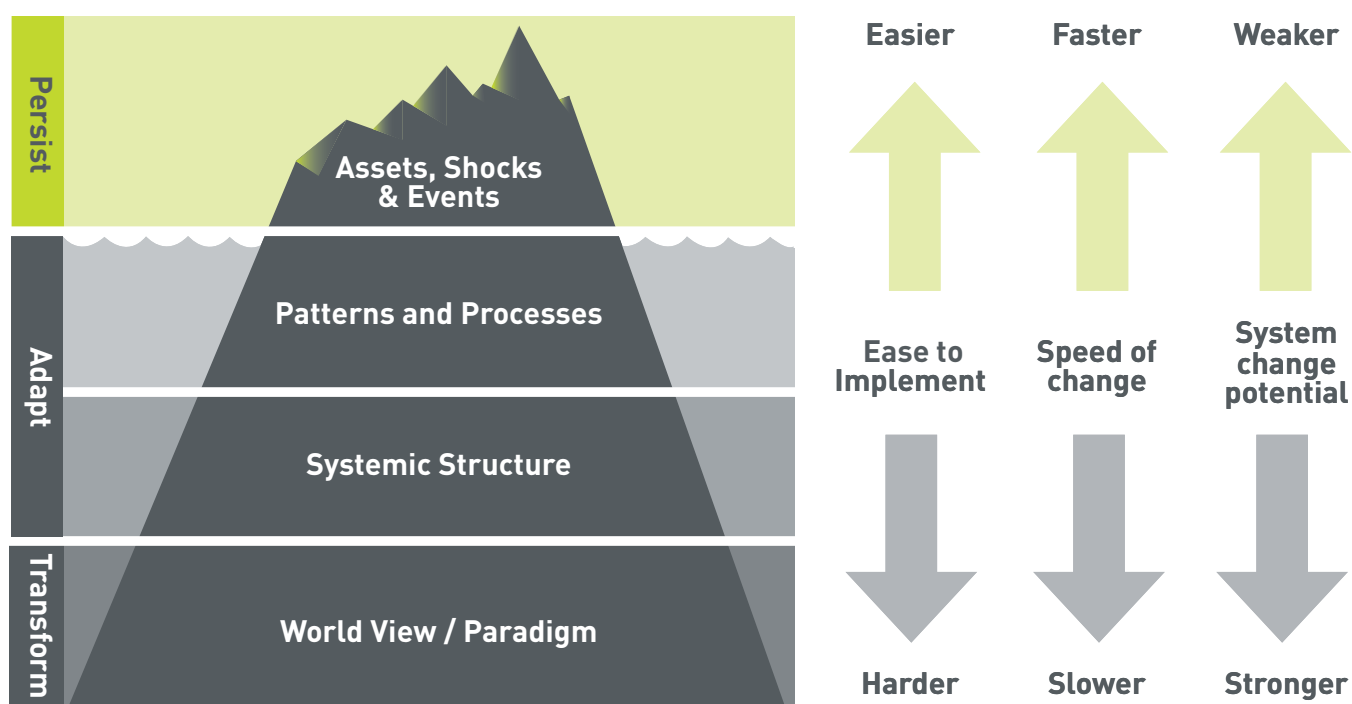
As truly improving our resilience relies on us addressing the systemic issues that challenge us (as in the diagram on the following page), the Interest Panels focused primarily on addressing systemic issues. However, addressing systems is harder and takes time. As a consequence, the groups also identified quick wins, which will support and lead to long term systemic change but enable the region to action important initiatives quickly and see some early successes.

As a consequence of the holistic and systems approach taken by the community and the Interest Panels, the actions in this Plan are not always within scope for the Project Partners, however they represent what the region needs to build resilience, irrespective of who should drive it.

This Plan includes recommendations to bring other stakeholders on board to enable implementation.



TYPES OF INTERVENTIONS THAT SUPPORT RESILIENCE¹⁵



The iceberg model demonstrates that it is most effective to intervene more deeply within our system. Working above the water will not address the underlying patterns, processes and systematic structures that enable us to adapt and transform. It may take time and be harder to implement, but deep adaptation and transformation provides stronger potential to respond positively in the face of change.

¹⁵ Iceberg model adapted from Australian Resilience Centre, 2019.

Priorities for Resilience Intervention and Action

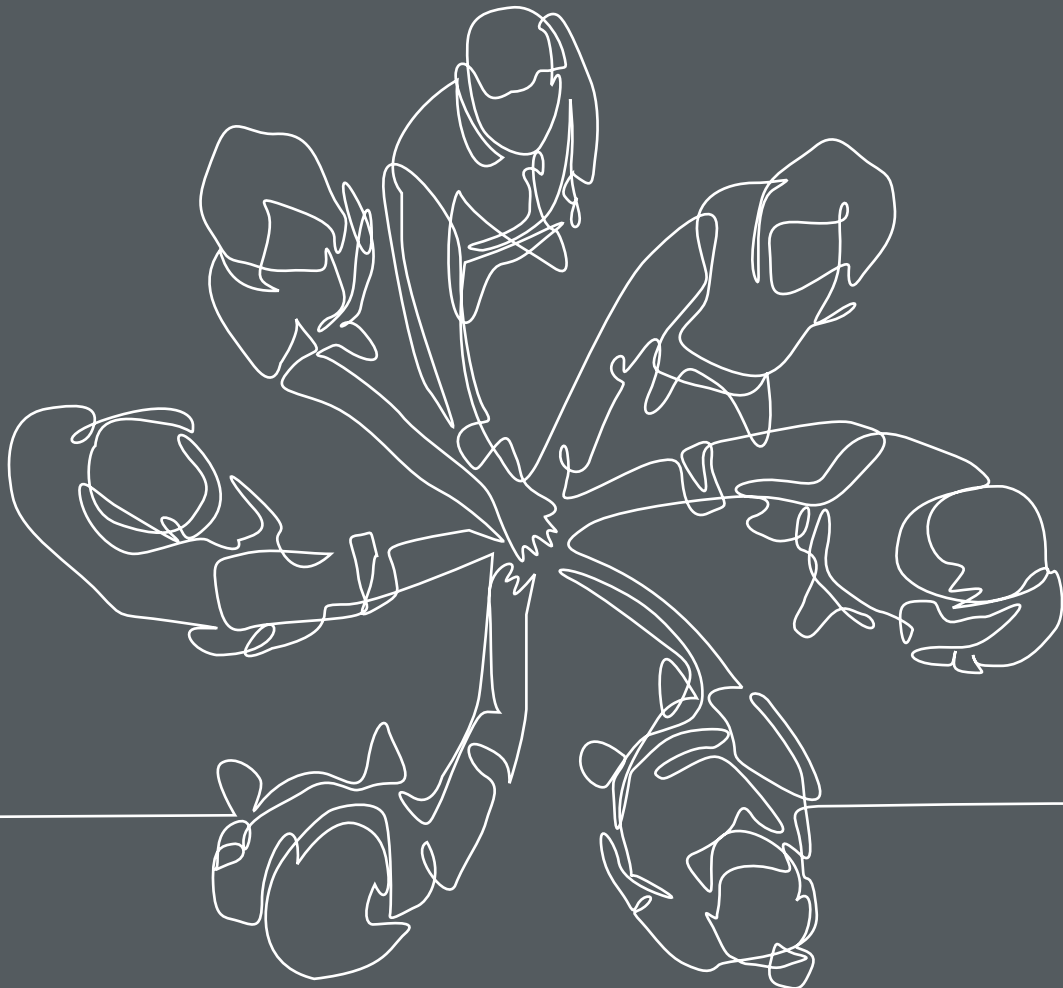
The Interviews, Community Conversations, Regional Summit and the Interest Panels identified a suite of priority recommendations that we need to focus on to ensure that our communities and economy are as resilient as they can be in the face of drought and climate change.

These priority recommendations are organised under six key resilience outcomes as follows:

- 1. Cohesive, Organised and Empowered to Take Responsibility**
- 2. Building our Social Capital**
- 3. Learning for Change**
- 4. Planned and Prepared**
- 5. Diverse and Flexible**
- 6. Collaborative, Connected and Inclusive**

Priority 1:

Cohesive, Organised and Empowered to Take Responsibility



Priority 1: Cohesive, Organised and Empowered to Take Responsibility

GOAL

Because no one group has control of a complex system, no one can build resilience on their own. Resilience building must be a system wide, collective process.

Self-organisation, local decision making, and cohesion are important for addressing local problems.

There is very clear evidence that communities with strong social capital and capacity to self-organise suffer less during shocks and disasters and recover faster.

OUTCOMES



Strategic direction for the region determined by the region



Improved coordination across sectors and community



Improved collaboration



Action driven by the community



RECOMMENDATIONS

Embed this Resilience Plan

Being a resilient region requires having a flexible plan for achieving that resilience and driving it.

This Plan is our region's starting place - a living Plan that we want to keep working on and developing.

Whilst the MRLGA, MRLB and RDAMR partnership has led the process for the development of this Plan we now need to build a coalition of local organisations and individuals to lead together.

The further development of this Plan and its implementation requires the efforts of individuals, leaders, business, local government, government agencies and non-government sector – working together with a shared purpose.

This was recognised by our Interest Panels, who recommended two actions for embedding this Plan and driving it going forward:

- 1. The Resilience Principles** outlined in this Plan provide the focus for action - to enable everyone in the region to act to improve our resilience flexibly and collectively.
- 2. A Coalition of the Willing** is established - to advocate for the plan and drive its implementation now and into the future.

Resilience Principles

This Plan identifies a set of principles (pg 9) that have been developed by approximately 550 people throughout this process.

It is recommended that the community continue to evolve the principles and activate them by using them to guide the interventions that support resilience.

These principles describe the way we choose to be as a region. They are signposts which enable us to work together towards being more resilient and also indicate to others outside of the region (ie Federal and State Governments) how they can support our regional resilience vision.

The principles should be used and activated by the communities of our region and must have meaning for the community - they need to be defined and tailored by communities who choose to use them. The action of tailoring and activating these principles will bring us together to have the conversations we need to have about our resilience, connect and weave our stories and experiences and share ideas.

These principles will enable us to be more prepared and proactive, respond and recover from disruption and shock.

The Interest Panels have recommended that these principles be used by Local, State and Federal Government, individuals, private organisations, industry organisations and NGO as when they are developing their own plans, designing programs or implementing services to help the region to be more resilient.

Activating these principles will need to involve:

1. Bringing institutions on a journey

as this work develops so that they can also contribute and apply the principles to their work. To do this we are proposing the establishment of a Coalition of the Willing - as outlined on the following page.

2. Engaging with the community -

put the community at the centre of activating and tailoring the principles as this Plan is updated. It is vital that the Plan is inclusive of everyone b our First Nations People, multicultural communities, those with a disability / vulnerability and young people.

3. Build awareness and ownership across the region by celebrating and sharing projects that model the principles in action.

This will involve understanding where best practice exists already in the region and building on those strengths. Projects like *Berri Our Town* and *Imagine Murray Bridge* are good local examples.



Coalition of the Willing

The Interest Panels have recommended that we develop a Coalition of the Willing to evolve and implement this Plan over time.

There is no existing body whose remit is to ensure the resilience of our region, so we need to choose to do it together. We need to generate energy and momentum together.

Those in the Coalition of the Willing will be any individual or organisation in the region who/which wants to sign up to formally and publicly work towards this Plan to build regional resilience. They will see the value in this Plan and want to be part of making it happen. Those early coalition members are probably already involved!

Initially, the Coalition will start with driving implementation of this Plan - but it is intended to go beyond that. In the longer term it is proposed that the Coalition turn this Plan into a strategic plan for the region. A plan that takes a longer-term view - mapping a 30-year vision and strategic goals.

Our region's leaders, citizens and organisations need to do this together. The Interest Panels hoped that our regional media would be an active part of this Coalition.

Building a Coalition of the Willing will help ensure that the strategic needs of the region endure beyond the political cycle - our long-term needs will always stay in focus.

Having agency and being empowered

This Plan articulates the needs of our community for improving our resilience, in their voice.

The preparation of this Plan, written by our people, is just the start of what's needed to make ours a truly resilient region.

We need to continue to raise the voice of people in our region and give them the ability to influence decisions which impact on them in the region. We need to explore new models that work for the region, and engage governments in the process so that we can get better policy decisions that consider our local context.

We also need to reignite our community, activate, and inspire them to drive change. Being passive is not an option for us.

This Plan, and the process of engagement that has been central to its development, as well as future engagement to build on it, will be central to this.

The Coalition of the Willing will be central to advocating within government for the region's needs (as articulated in the Plan) and also driving implementation themselves (where relevant).

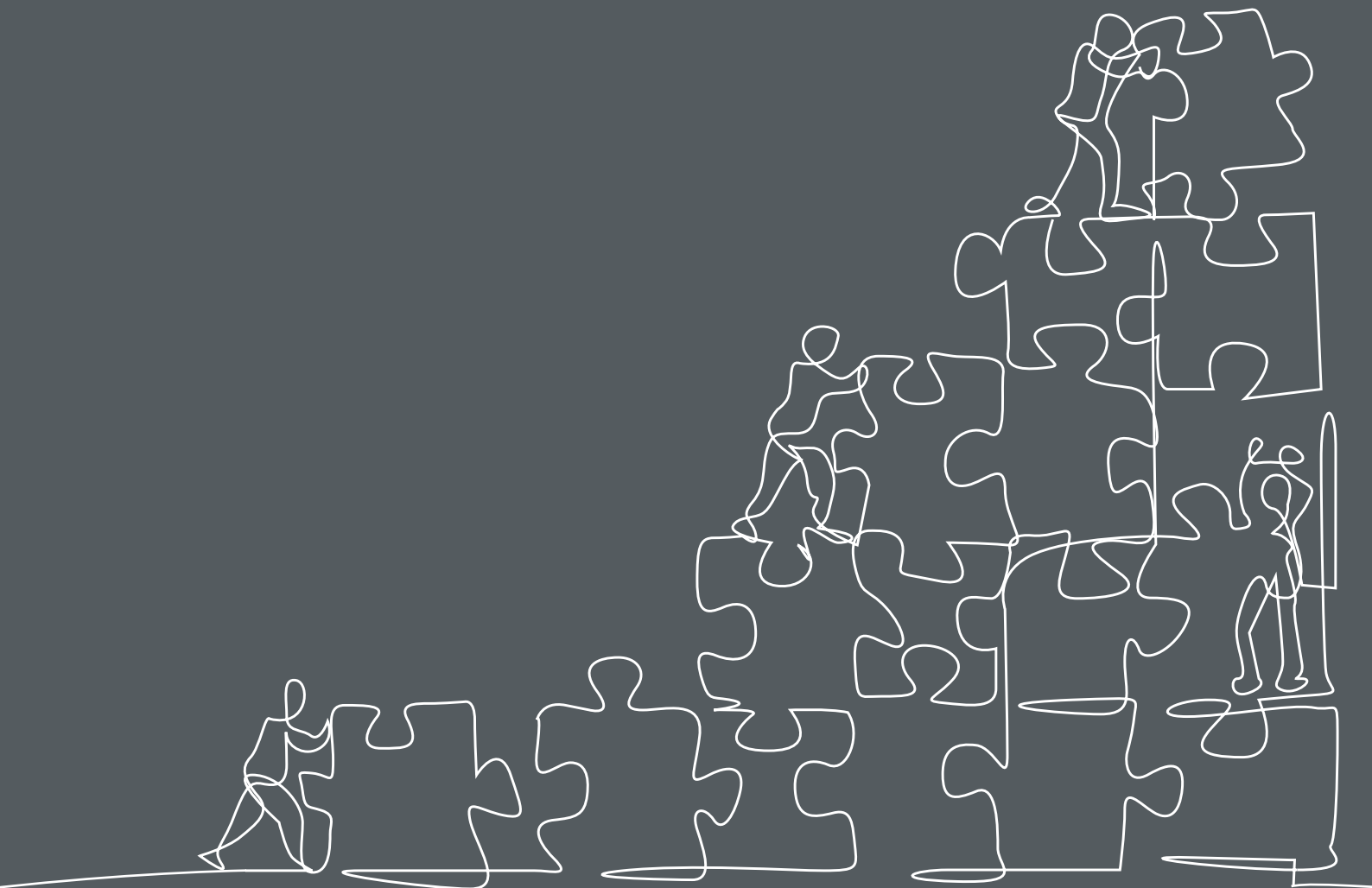
Recommendation Summary

Persist - Immediate actions

1. Start the process of building the Coalition of the Willing.
2. Start sharing case studies/best practice examples of the MR Plan in action.

Priority 2:

Building Our Social Capital



Priority 2:

Building Our Social Capital

GOAL

At its essence, social capital reflects a community's ability to secure benefits and invent solutions to problems through working together.

Resilient communities are able to integrate their resources and capability to plan for and respond positively to crises and adapt to pressures.

Capability includes skills, motivation, leadership and competence.¹⁶

We want to build the capability of our businesses and our community leaders.

OUTCOMES



Resilient individuals



Effective and engaging leaders



Industry Innovation

We recognise that community happens not at a regional level, but where there is commonality in passions/interests or locations.

Communities exist in many varied ways - put simply they are a group of people with a common purpose. Our region is made up of many thriving communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having looked at the region's strengths and vulnerabilities (as articulated by the community through the Community Conversations) our Interest Panels recommended that the Plan focus on the following key elements to build our capability:

1. Support the development of strong leaders (both informal and formal).
2. Growing reciprocal accountability.
3. Foster entrepreneurship - to support industry development, collaboration, and diversification.

“We want to develop an adaptive, networked, leadership development system in the region, that brings diverse people together to generate place-based solutions”

~ Interest Panel Participant

Community leadership

Leadership may be formal (elected or appointed leaders through all levels of Local, State and Federal Government) or informal (leaders who are recognised in the community for their strength, judgement or expertise but may not hold a position or official title) – both forms of leadership are important to recognise and foster to ensure a resilient region.¹⁷

The substance and style of decision-making by leaders is very important.

The Interest Panels recommended developing and building strong and engaging leaders who work with the region's communities to prepare for and respond to possible disruptions. They proposed that the region seek to build a system of leadership that fosters resilience in our region.

To this end, they recommended that a process be resourced to:

1. Identify what we want and need in our leaders to build resilience in the region through a process of engagement and conversation with the community. It is intended that this process be inspiring, (not a critique), aiming to energise existing leaders and give them a better understanding of community expectations and also to excite new community members to step up and lead. (Refer Recommendation - “Measuring leadership success” - pg 20 for details)

2. Provide local opportunities to develop, support and nurture passionate people, to mobilise leadership action, through the following mechanisms:

- a.** Establish a leaders' network/s - where current or potential leaders can come together to help and support each other - a community of practice.
- b.** Find and celebrate examples of local leadership that epitomises the type of leadership we need to grow.
- c.** Identify and support leadership skills in 'voices' or groups that aren't currently represented amongst our leaders (i.e. those from diverse multicultural communities and those with a disability). We need to empower individuals to realise they can be leaders (growth mindset not deficit of leadership) - giving them the opportunity to be involved.

The Interest Panels also highlighted the need to retain and expand on existing programs that are successfully supporting the development of leaders in the region - such as the *Drought Rural Leadership Program*.

^{16/17} Australian Social Inclusion Board, “Building inclusive and resilient communities”, http://www.emergencyvolunteering.com.au/docs/Building_Inclusive_and_Resilient_Communities.pdf



Measuring leadership success

The Community Conversations clearly identified that a central issue for the resilience of the region is the level of distrust in the region's leaders.

The Community Conversations identified the importance of community having confidence that their leaders are listening to them. Equally it was identified that there is a responsibility on the community to get involved, to activate and participate in their democracy. Growing mutual respect and mutual accountability was central.

The Interest Panel participants reflected that this isn't just a local issue and that it is part of a national (even global) trend - but that nevertheless it is important and that it needs to be addressed.

The Interest Panels highlighted the importance of creating the conditions that enable the growth and development of leaders.

They recommended creating a mechanism for the community to define what is expected of leaders – a new system of active democracy for the region. This is equally about 'holding them to account' and also showing them what we expect.

To this end the Interest Panels recommended that the community work to outline collaboratively and clearly what they expect of their leaders; what representation means to them.

This articulation of the communities 'expectations' would then be used to measure how the region is progressing in achieving its "Community Leadership" recommendation (previous page).

About the Measure

It is proposed that community develop criteria which they will use to monitor/measure how closely leaders are meeting community expectations. In doing so community will need to be clear what they mean when they say that their 'leaders don't listen to them' or they don't feel like their leaders respect them.

The measure would need to be evidence based/ have strong validity.

The measure could be a localised version of the *Edelman Trust barometer*¹⁸ - providing leaders with regular feedback on how well they are going in the minds of the community and clarity about how they can improve.

How the measure would be developed, monitored, and updated

The Interest Panels recommended that the measure be developed and monitored through a Regional Summit involving the Coalition of the Willing and a diverse sample of the community. A process of Community Conversations could also be held in the lead up to the event and feed in the thoughts of hundreds (if not thousands) of residents across the region. It is proposed that the summit be held annually. The first summit would develop the 'expectations' (the measures) and future summits would reflect on progress and refine.

Leaders would be asked to 'opt in' to using the measure/committing to work in line with the measure.

¹⁸ <https://www.edelman.com/trust/trust-barometer>

Fostering entrepreneurship

Innovation helps us address all the challenges we might face, in a creative and flexible way. If industry can innovate quickly, the region will be able to respond more quickly when unexpected things happen.

Fostering innovation and creativity helps us to think outside the box to combat crises (e.g., the housing crisis, put in transportable accommodation for staff or provide satellite internet for communication). All great leaders are innovators.

Collaboration leads to innovation. Bringing together people with different ideas, generates new thinking. Bringing people together enables people to learn from each other. It provides people with the opportunity to test their ideas with those who have different perspectives and experiences which in turn can assist in alleviating risk and maximising benefits/value.

In addition, we need to invest in people who bring new ideas, new approaches and rich ideas to our region. Their diversity and energy create positive waves that infect and inspire others.

It is recommended that ways to foster entrepreneurship are explored and encouraged to promote innovation, collaboration, and diversity in our economy.

This is critical to fostering entrepreneurship.

We want to foster a culture of entrepreneurship in the region by:

- 1. Rewarding and recognising entrepreneurialism.**
- 2. Play match maker** - bring funders and innovators together, using a finance factory/ shark tank approach.
- 3. Enable and promote collaboration between, within and across industry groups** - as a means of changing mindsets about collaboration over competition.
 - This could be achieved by building an understanding of best practice collaboration practice, including sharing how to do it effectively and the benefits.
 - Identify examples/initiatives where collaboration is happening already - and what facilitated/enabled these collaborations.

This provides an opportunity to change the system while also pursuing some small visible successes.

This initiative should link to other existing programs such as the *New Venture Institute* by Flinders University and those run by Business SA.¹⁹

¹⁹ <https://www.nviflinders.com.au/about/>

Recommendation Summary

Persist - Immediate actions

1. Establish a process to Identify what is wanted/needed from leaders to build resilience in the region through a process of engagement and conversation with community and establish a mechanism for monitoring and review.
2. Establish a Leaders Network.
3. Develop a program/plan for supporting entrepreneurialism in the region (which builds on existing programs), which includes:
 - a) System of recognition
 - b) Match making
 - c) Mechanisms for collaboration
 - d) Bringing new voices to inspire

Adapt - Medium term

1. Establish a process/mechanism for identifying potential leaders, particularly amongst groups not typically represented amongst the regions leaders.



Priority 3:

Learning for Change



Priority 3:

Learning for Change

GOAL

To support regional resilience through improved understanding of what the risks and opportunities are and build the strength, flexibility, and resourcefulness of people.

OUTCOMES



Improved access to information about disruptive events and the implications of these events



Improved business planning for disruption



Improved resilience of the region's youth

Adaptive Learning

Learning for change has started with the work on this Plan - as a process of adaptive learning has been central to its development.

As part of the Interest Panel process participants identified existing or recent initiatives in the region which they assessed as being important for achieving the principles. These initiatives are a first pass on relevant regional initiatives and the list at **Attachment D** is not exhaustive - it needs to evolve and we need to convert many more 'unknown' initiatives to 'known' initiatives. We need adaptive learning to understand the value of, and how best to, enhance these and other initiatives.

Where relevant, Interest Panel participants were asked to review the identified initiatives and indicate what initiatives the region should pursue, and which initiatives were no longer of assistance. This assisted the group's consideration of what new initiatives should be pursued in this Plan and what existing initiatives could be built upon or supported.

Improved access to information

The people and businesses of the region need to understand the change that is coming. People need to understand why change is needed.

But people expressed a fear of disruption. There is work to be done on how 'change' and 'disruption' are understood and to do that, people firstly need access to information.

There is a real issue with the extent of and accessibility of information available.

Localised information is needed - not just at a regional scale but to a local government scale.

There is a need to build awareness and knowledge in everyone who lives, works, and visits the region about disruption b how to understand it, prepare for it and, when it comes, how to respond. This will enable businesses to make evidence-based decisions about where to invest and identify opportunities for innovation.

The key to planning effectively for disruption is clear, simple, coherent, and easy to access information about what future disruptions may look like and the implications of them.

To foster lasting capability and ownership by everyone in our region to respond with resilience to disruption in positive ways, the region needs accurate, clear and accessible information.

By doing this, we can continue to ensure that our community solutions and responses are ground up, whilst being informed by the most up to date data available and best practice approaches.

To this end, it is recommended that:

- **The community, industry and government are fully informed of the threats that will disrupt the region** - from drought/climate change/natural disasters, to risks such as water security, incursions of new pests and diseases or export disruption. This may require technology which utilises sophisticated mapping techniques to enable communities to drill down into local areas to see the types of risks likely to affect their area and how likely the risk is - as well as linking to information about the implications of those risks.
- **Map the region's systems** - The region can be viewed as a complex and adaptive system. This system has many social, economic and institutional elements, or moving parts, which interact. Understanding how these system elements are interwoven and the impact each system element has in relation to each other will be vital in the development of a living plan. This deep level of regional knowledge can prepare all regional actors to shape a positive and prosperous future.

Enabling the better assessment of risk by local industry

A resilient region needs businesses that are prepared for disruption and can bounce back quickly.

Whilst farming is at the centre of the economy - they rely on an ecosystem of other businesses and services to survive. The success of the agricultural sector relies on other industry sectors in the region also surviving.

Whilst farming businesses across the region prepare for drought in a 'business as usual way', not all the region's businesses are prepared for or thinking about disruption.

Information is aid.

All businesses in the region need access to a self-assessment tool that helps them to understand the risks that face their businesses and what they can do to better plan for how they mitigate those risks.

The self-assessment tool will help businesses to test their readiness, building:

- What disruptions might their business be likely to experience/should they plan for?
- Understanding of their options
- Understanding their current business financial capacity
- Understanding what diversity could do for their business level of risk
- Understanding trends in their industry or business

Every business in the region is unique, meaning that a one-size fits all approach simply won't work. Businesses need a tool that enables them to better understand what risks they are facing and the implications of these risks.

The tool needs to link to different training modules which can assist businesses to improve their knowledge and build skills that help them to adapt. This needs to be simple initially - allowing people to understand what they need and as their needs change/evolve they can access more advanced modules.

To assist in the development and design of the tool and training modules, as a first step, it is recommended that an analysis is undertaken across the region to identify knowledge gaps and understand what tools already exist to support industry. We understand that there is currently a self assessment tool in development for farmers under the *Future Drought Fund* - the proposed initiative here could represent an extension to this work.

It is noted that as important as developing the tool is communicating about its existence and supporting the industry to use it.



Investing in developing resilient youth

A resilient region relies centrally on the strength, flexibility, and resourcefulness of its people. The youth of the region - are its future. It is vital that our youth are as strong and as adaptable as they can be to respond to disruptive events into the future.

Helping children engage at school can create a strong sense of social capital in both children and adults. Parents who become involved with school events and activities are able to form social networks and feel they are part of the wider community. Children who learn to form social networks and understand how to recognise and talk about their problems grow up with a strong sense of resilience, ensuring the community stays strong as they grow up.²⁰

The Interest Panels have recommended that a region-wide program is developed to build and strengthen resilience in our young people which actively supports their participation in the future of the region.

This program would educate and raise awareness in our community of the importance of resilience, while also promoting and supporting connections.

The program could be run through the existing Year 10 subject “*Personal Learning Program* (PLP)” which is compulsory for all students in all schools in South Australia to complete.

The Interest Panels proposed that the PLP become a series of opportunities for young people to experience spending time with mentors, short term vocational experiences, skill building, expansive experiences, leadership opportunities and work – all in our vast and diverse region.

The revised program would aim to promote equity of opportunity for all young people; to help them learn about themselves and give them the skills and connections they need locally to be more resilient and to be productive community members.

The program would build pride in the region and enable young people to make the region their region of choice by connecting them with opportunities that enable them to stay or return.

The program would focus on lifting those students that are not as engaged with school, in a way that is adaptable to their own community/culture. This supports the concept of ‘No child gets left behind’.

The concept also supports connecting the generations - as young people learn skills from older people and vice versa.

²⁰ “The Resilience Project”, <https://www.australianunity.com.au/about-us/partnerships/resilience/building-community-resilience-in-times-of-adversity>

Recommendation Summary

Persist - Immediate actions

1. Analysis of data about threats to the region (climate change data mainly) - what information is available and where are the gaps in information at a local level.
2. Creation of an interactive map - to enable communities and businesses to easily consider the threats facing their area and the implications of those threats.
3. Review what exists in the region for different industries to help industry understand the risks they face and how they might manage/address those risks.
4. Exploration of how the PLP could be adapted in the region to assist in building resilience in youth.

Adapt - Medium term

1. The data analysis above may lead to the need for further research.
2. Develop a program including a self-assessment tool that helps improve business understanding of the implications of the risks to their businesses and how they might address them.

Priority 4:

Planned and Prepared



Priority 4:

Planned and Prepared

GOAL

The region wants to be prepared for drought or any other disruptive event.

OUTCOMES



Improved response by government and communities to disruption



Reduced disruptions to communications



Provision of basic services that meet ongoing community needs

Preparing for Drought

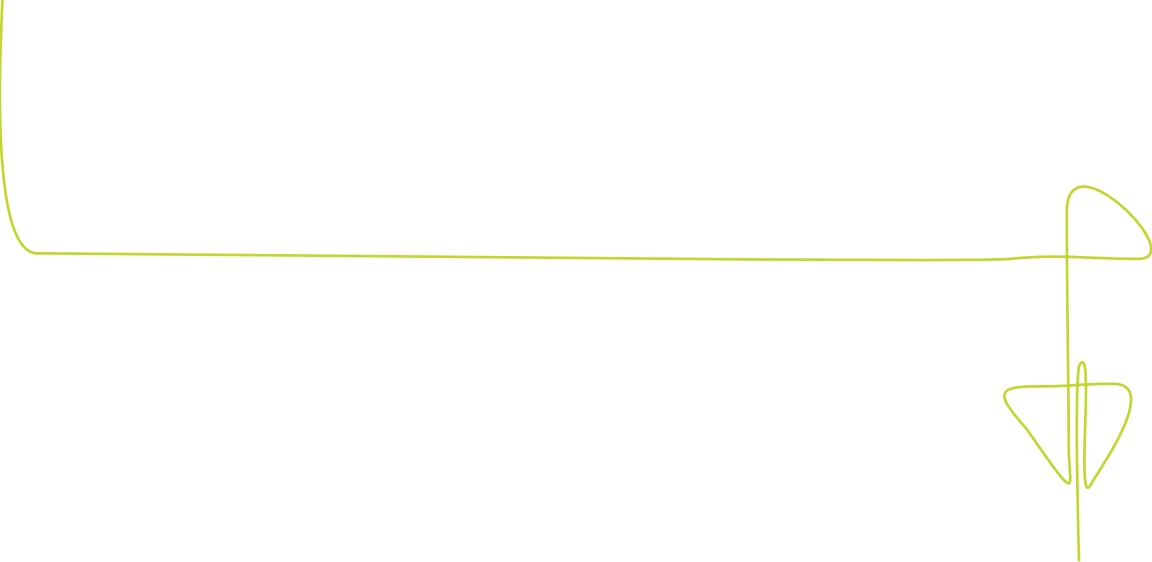
The region knows drought - from generations of experience. The region's communities know that they need to be better prepared for it.

Many communities and businesses (mainly agricultural related businesses) are preparing for drought as part of a 'business-as-usual approach' - it is embedded in how they work. For others it's not considered until it's happening.

While the impacts of drought are understood by the community, there is a concern by the community that governments don't understand it sufficiently. The Interest Panels recommended that there be a focus in this Plan on working to ensure that governments, as well as the region are preparing for drought well in advance and together as standard practice.

While drought support is always well intended, it is often only accessible by businesses very late in the crisis. Declarations of drought can also result in polarising communities - pitting farmers against farmers.

A new system is needed to ensure equity in the application of drought relief funding. The region needs to be better organised and the approach to drought funding needs to mature; recognising that drought impacts our entire community (and not just our farmers).



Future drought funding needs to achieve two specific objectives:

- Prevention of harm/early intervention, rather than waiting until farmers and or communities get to breaking point
- Bringing community together, rather than dividing the community, noting that our strengths as communities are in our connection to people and place

Exactly how this is achieved - the Interest Panels couldn't define precisely - yet.

However, to help find a way forward they recommended the following actions:

1. Reflection and learning - that a study is undertaken to better inform governments about how current approaches to drought emergency relief affect communities, farmers, and local industry.

The study needs to build on studies that have occurred in the past, but need to be more holistic and focused on systemic change. In particular the study needs to raise awareness about:

- i. Irrigation droughts as well as dryland droughts and how they need to be addressed differently.
- ii. What drought does to a region, and how interventions either support or polarise communities. How to prevent polarisation of communities through drought relief.
- iii. Possible opportunities to give communities more agency in how drought funding is determined and allocated.

- iv. How a community typically mobilises (i.e. hay runs), how it supports its own (i.e. social activities) and how government support can supplement/amplify these local efforts
- v. Best practice in drought and/or emergency relief - which explores and analyses local (ie Resilience NSW) and international case studies.

This study should align to and link with the work of the Drought Hub and other initiatives under the Future Drought Fund.

2. Drought needs to be recognised as an emergency event - with a clear chain of command and governance system which promotes the voices of the local community.

This is explored throughout this Plan. Community needs to be empowered to help make decisions about the action taken during a drought. It is vital that the region informs what the government does during a drought - not vice versa.

“We need to be thinking about how we reduce harm in our community from drought ... diversification is part of this picture ... so is how we use and manage our water resources”

~ Interest Panel Participant

Planning for disruptive events and emergencies

The Region needs to be better prepared for responding to and recovering from disruption.

When the region experiences disruptive events, such as bushfires and storms, the community and government agencies respond immediately, completely, and generally well as part of the emergency response. The collective work of fire fighters (CFS and farm fire fighting units) is something to behold. The CWA, community support groups and individuals jump into action.

When it comes to recovery however, (once the threat has passed), the roles and the process is less clear- impacting the overall quality and speed of community recovery.

The region can be better prepared for bushfires, floods, and other natural emergencies. The region needs to be as adept in the recovery phase as it is in the emergency response. There is a need to improve how coordination and support occurs – at both government and community level.

We recommended that improvements are made to coordinate plans, clarify roles and responsibilities (especially for recovery), and do this collaboratively.

Specifically, it has been recommended that there is work to:

1. Clarify transitions - what would need to be in place to move from 'emergency response' to recovery - and that there is a clear decision or definition of when the region would move from emergency response to recovery for different types of events and emergencies.

2. Clarify roles and responsibilities during recovery – these are clear during the emergency, but the roles get blurred the further away we get from an event - we need to be clear about roles and responsibilities during the recovery phase. This will include making sure the region has the right structures and processes in place to involve and connect the key groups involved in the recovery phase. Each Local Council has its own recovery approach. There is a need to achieve consistency across all Local Councils in the region – so that no matter where you are in the region, the recovery system is the same.

3. Review the emergency services planning framework (used during the emergency response) to make sure it is connecting with the community and other key stakeholders sufficiently.

- i. How can this planning process be more collaborative?
- ii. How should the community be engaged in this, so they understand what happens and are clear on their own responsibilities?



Adequate communications

Communication is central to resilience - for business/industry and individuals. It is vital that the region has adequate technology to enable effective communication.

The region's ability to communicate and power homes and businesses during a disruption or emergency can determine the size of an emergency's impact.

The draft *Murraylands and Riverland Telecommunications Review by Local Government Area* (RDAMR 2022 draft for comment) identifies that the region received more than 20% of all sites allocated to South Australia through the *State and Federal Mobile Black Spots* program funding. As a result, more than 99% of dwellings and the population across the region are covered by at least one Mobile Network Operator, placing the region at the top of regional Australia in terms of mobile coverage.

There remain areas that need improving, largely due to the pending decommissioning of 3G mobile networks in 2024 and the roll out of the NBN leaving several towns underserved with broadband access. Five population centres were identified as continuing to experience limited or no mobile coverage, both indoor and outdoors, being Karte, Colebatch, Ngarkat, Deepwater and Bunbury (noting that base station funding has been agreed for Colebatch).

The region needs adequate communications and power infrastructure – and the community needs to be supported to ensure that they have adequate plans and approaches in place to support themselves when their phones and power are down.

A combination of local business and community engagement, supported by more detailed economic and social profiling to build a supportive business case, is likely required to convince either NBNCo Limited or a third-party alternative network provider to improve broadband connectivity in towns underserved with broadband access. Greater emphasis should now be placed on supporting the adoption and deployment of emerging alternative technologies and connectivity networks, especially to support the Internet of Things type activities and developments, especially where the roll out of the NBN has proved substandard.

It is recommended that a study is undertaken to establish the vulnerabilities in power backup for the region's communication hubs, to create a system that has adequate/enhanced renewable backup to enable continuity in times of emergency events.

“The best form of aid in an emergency is communication.”

~ Interest Panel Participant

The study should explore:

1. Where the communications vulnerabilities are

- incorporate mapping of where the infrastructure is and where it isn't.

2. The opportunities to address power/energy vulnerabilities in the region

including (but not necessarily limited to):

- i. A spur off the interconnector:** With the interconnector going into the Riverland, is there an opportunity for it to have a spur going into the Murraylands.
- ii. Alternative / renewable power:** Can we connect with existing solar farms and/or use batteries? Is there a push to upgrade single-wire earth return (SWER) power in these areas?

3. Vulnerabilities of mobile phone towers: All mobile phone tower operators should have capability for external power.

4. Vulnerabilities in community knowledge/understanding. The study should propose mechanisms to raise community awareness about how they can plan for disruptions in communications and what they can put in place to address these issues.

5. How collaboration can be improved between key organisations - to prevent communication issues.

6. How imminent changes to our communications systems could provide an opportunity to effectively and efficiently address these issues (e.g. the move to 5G).

The study should also be informed by recommendations from previous studies that have considered what has happened on fire grounds and the suggested reforms recommended in these studies.

All communications carriers should participate in the study as well as the relevant state, local and federal organisations. It should be undertaken collectively, as an industry. This study should also be informed by lived experience - of communities and businesses who can provide input.

It is important to note that whilst this recommendation is aimed at addressing issues we face during emergencies, reforms and infrastructure improvements in this area will have substantial benefits for all businesses in the region in conducting their work on a day-to-day basis.

“People rely on communication almost more than water nowadays in times of crisis.”

~ Interest Panel Participant

Audit of services and resources

Participants in the Community Conversations told us that schools, a local doctor, houses for workers and a grocery store help to make their towns and communities sustainable.

The region's communities want their children to attend school locally, they want to play sport for their local sporting team, and they need childcare locally. They need these services to support their basic human needs.

When these basic services are in place, our region's towns thrive; providing job opportunities, supporting other businesses to thrive (providing services their workforce needs) and providing places for communities to come together to connect and mobilise.

The resilience of many communities across the region are at increased risk due to the significant loss of crucial services and resources.

Consequently, it is recommended that an audit is conducted of the community services/resources that the region needs and use that to inform business cases for future investment in services.

It was recommended that the audit should look at:

- Healthcare (including mental health services),
- Aged care
- Aboriginal support services
- Emergency services
- Housing
- Schools and educational facilities
- Childcare and youth services
- Shopping, banking, and postage services
- Multicultural services (CALD services)
- Places for community to connect – community centres, groups etc.

The audit should ask:

- 1. What are the community challenges? What services or resources are needed to address these challenges?**
- 2. What services already exist?** Are there issues with knowledge/information about the services?
- 3. How easy is it for people to connect or access the services?** What is an appropriate distance to travel? What does 'accessible' mean in the context of different services. How far is too far? This links to Recommendation - "Employ Community Connectors" pg 42.
- 4. Where are the gaps?** Where are there duplications?
- 5. The opportunities for addressing identified gaps in services.**

Whilst the Interest Panel was not aware of a commensurate audit, it was noted that this initiative should build on any previous work undertaken on this issue.

Recommendation Summary

Persist - Immediate actions

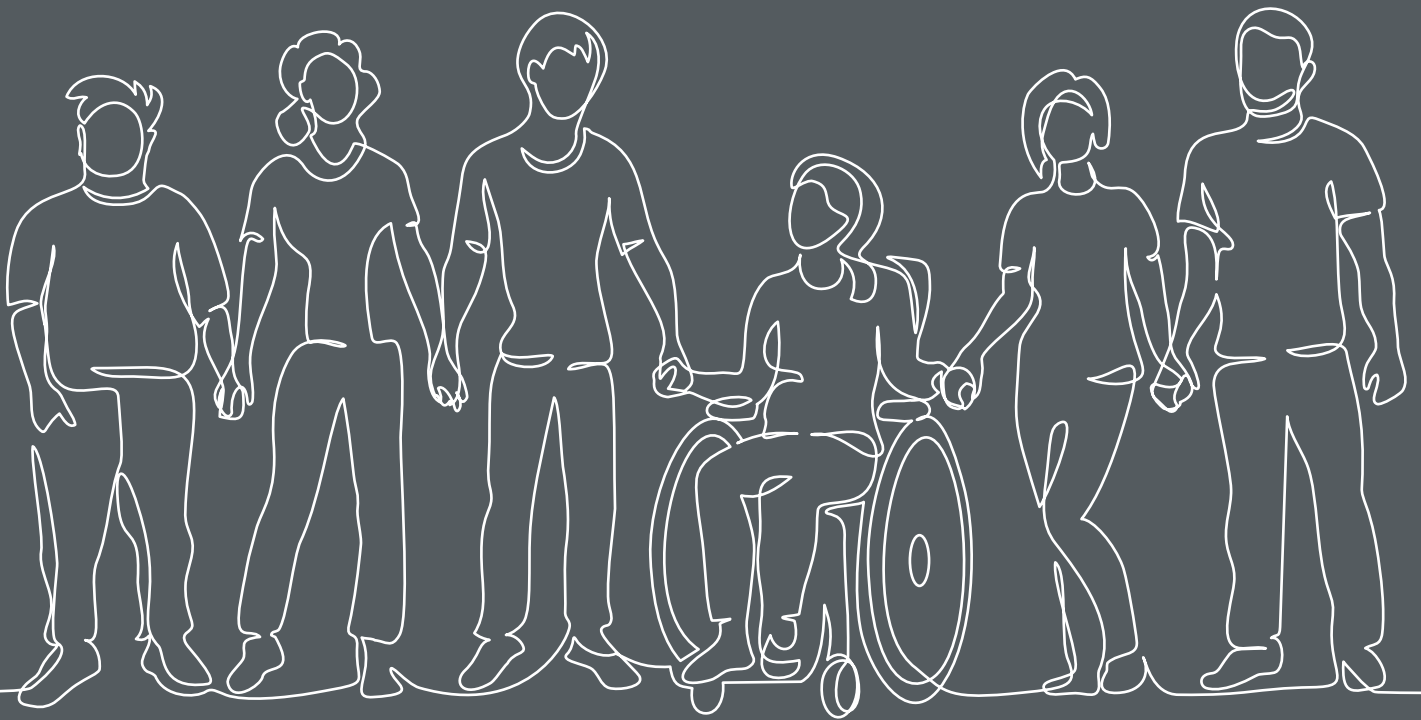
1. Conduct a study of drought relief and its impact on communities (including a literature review of what exists already and where the gaps are).
2. Review the emergency services planning framework - to improve how it connects with community.
3. Study into communications in the region and how to ensure adequate power supply for communications during an emergency.

Adapt - Medium term

1. Improvements to planning for the transition from emergency response to recovery.
2. Conduct an audit of community services.

Priority 5:

Diversity and Flexibility



Priority 5:

Diversity and Flexibility

GOAL

The region wants to diversify its economic base so that community wellbeing does not stand or fall according to the market fortunes of any single industry.

Business innovation will help to build local economic diversity and autonomy whilst helping the local economy to adapt to changing conditions.²¹

The region values and respects the natural capital (land and waters) upon which it is built.

OUTCOMES



An economy that is less exposed to drought



Job opportunities and people to fill them

Economic diversification

Diversification into new industries will help ensure that when one industry is impacted by an event or a disruption, the whole region isn't negatively impacted.

The region needs to diversify within the existing industrial base and diversify the region's economic base to attract and develop new industries. Diversification will include developing new market opportunities and value adding to existing products.

This will require progressive adaptation over time.

The Interest Panels recommended that businesses are supported to explore, identify, and implement opportunities for economic diversity.

To enable this to happen they proposed that the region needs the following:

- 1. Industry/Sectoral Research** - also assist by looking at case studies of what has happened elsewhere and commission some research/ investigations that identify information that is tailored to that sector's needs.
- 2. Celebrate successes** - identify and communicate the small visible successes. Communications is critical to drive diversification as this is what helps people be comfortable with change, excited, and also see the relevance to their lives.

²¹ http://www.emergencyvolunteering.com.au/docs/Building_Inclusive_and_Resilient_Communities.pdf

3. Explore new land production systems and management that can be used in a changing marginal environment. The region has significant natural capital, and a heavy reliance on dry land crops. The region uses improved scientific understanding of soil health, biomass and new/emerging farming systems to improve agricultural practices and take advantage of new market opportunities.

4. Information from government (and research institutions) - People need to understand the change that is coming and potential opportunities. This is explored further in Recommendation - "Improved Access to Information" pg 25.

5. Build a Self-assessment tool that helps us to understand where our businesses are at and how we can diversify - as discussed in Recommendation - "Enabling the better assessment of risk by local industry" pg 21.

This work will give us flexibility and options to build resilience - it may even give us a market advantage.

Region of Choice

The region will have strength in numbers!

The region wants to attract and retain a diversity of people to contribute to and sustain its economy.

To do this the region needs to become a destination of choice. The region needs to be known for its liveability.

Businesses are trying to promote the region and encourage people to move for jobs, but it's bigger than them... it needs a regional holistic view.

The region needs to create clusters of businesses of choice - having one great business of choice is not enough. It needs a regional view and vision that we all aspire to.

Addressing this issue is of vital importance because industry is having substantial issues attracting people to the region to work. The region needs people with skill sets including, but not limited to health professionals and people that can support farm production.

To do this, the region needs to show prospective skilled workers that they can have everything they need here, for their whole family.

This recommendation links closely to Recommendation - "Audit of services and resources" pg 35.

"It is the sum of all parts that makes up the economy - individual businesses being strong and diverse adds up to resilience for the region."

~ Interest Panel Participant



It is of fundamental importance to attracting people to the region that we have the services and resources that people need in our region.

Schools, medical services, shopping centres, housing and childcare services are central to attracting people to the area.

This recommendation also links to Recommendation - "Economic diversification" pg 40.

We need to understand our future economy and ensure that we are bringing people that we need for the future, for our future industries. Think about who the future community is! Be deliberate in who we attract, and what they need to bring and do here. Whilst we will be clear about what skills we need to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future - we want to be diverse in who we attract - young people, mature people, blue collar / white collar.

It is recommended that :

1. The Region commits to diversity and articulates this commitment.
2. Industry comes together with government to understand, explore and articulate the future workforce needs. What skills will be needed and roughly when it is expected that these skills will be required.

3. Promotion of our region then needs to occur
 - not as a one-off campaign - but through a series of permanent communications and awareness raising efforts. To do this the region will need to be clear on its value.

- a. Its strengths, and its unique offerings
- b. The rewards/opportunities and what's on offer in our region - including promoting existing business offerings
- c. Success stories (i.e. Study Adelaide)

We need to be looking at the region wide direction/plan for this - which enables us to have a line of sight to the long term as well as the short term.

Recommendation Summary

Adapt - Medium term

1. Develop and promote the regions value and commence coordinated promotion.
2. Businesses are supported to explore, identify, and implement opportunities for economic diversity.

Transform - Long term

3. Explore new land production systems and management based on new scientific understanding of soil health and biomass.

Priority 6:

Collaboration, Connection and Inclusion



Priority 6:

Collaboration, Connection and Inclusion

GOAL

Community connections make our communities resilient.

One of the strengths of the region is community cohesion and connectedness.

The region has places and opportunities to enable connection. Whether it is at the weekly footy match, in the local hairdresser, at the local café, through the local school, at work or at a community event or social function - community members need to connect and see each other regularly and they do! This gives strength. It is through having the opportunity to share journeys and experiences that people can learn from each other and offer each other support.

This is what creates a 'community'.

The region is lucky as there are many opportunities and ways to connect. The community viewed this as a real strength across the region. Many of these opportunities have been identified in **Attachment C**.

Community needs to nourish these opportunities and governments need to continue to support them.

Communities know that they have more work to do to be more inclusive and connect with new residents or those who feel disconnected.

Industry and community alike have also identified the need to be more collaborative in how they work and initiatives to support this are detailed in this Plan.

OUTCOMES



People are emotionally supported



People can access the services they need

Inclusion

Inclusion is the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or mental disabilities and recent migrants.

However, the Community Conversations and Interest Panels highlighted that 'equal access and opportunity' may not always be enough. That there is a need for the 'included' to 'reach out' and encourage participation by groups that are currently not participating as part of the community in the region.

Interest Panels and the Community Conversations identified the need for communities to:

- Be connected enough to know who is missing and who they need to reach out to 'include'.
- Help people understand what opportunities they might be missing.
- Make sure that opportunities to connect and engage are safe and accessible.

Participants realised the complexities in actioning this approach to inclusion but wanted to challenge individual communities to consider how to better include and connect with those in their communities that are currently disconnected and possibly disengaged.

In addition, the Interest Panels wanted to challenge organisations to use an inclusivity lens in all their work. This is why they have emphasised the importance of not leaving anyone behind - within the Together Community principle.

It is important that inclusion is a focus of all actions to improve resilience in the region.

Employ “Community Connectors”

It is recommended that Community Connectors are funded and supported to connect people to each other and existing services and resources in each community across the region.

Access to services and resources are important to a community, but they are worthless unless people know they are there, know how to connect with them and are supported to do so. It is recognised that this can organically happen in communities, but it can be more effective if it is well supported and accessible to all.

The Interest Panels identified that sometimes people think a service doesn't exist or that support doesn't exist - but they do, it is just that they aren't well known or promoted. In many cases we don't need more services, we just need to better connect people to the existing services.

To address these issues, the Interest Panels have recommended that a Community Connector role is established. It will be this person's job to find out what people are interested in and connect people. The person in this role could also facilitate a group of volunteer community connectors.

Recommendation Summary

Adapt - Medium term

1. Establish a 'community connector' role in local government.

Transform - Long term

1. As a community work to engage with and connect with those who are disconnected.



Implementation of the Plan: What next, what now?

The MR Plan process and purpose focuses on innovative ways to bring together community, industry and government, to develop a vision and an enduring regional voice.

Undertaking this process of engagement has demonstrated value in the act of listening, authentically and actively listening to community people in region to construct a narrative in their own words about resilience.

The planning process engaged deeply with the community to produce a written plan which has shifted the outcome of a traditional plan; the MR Plan has not focused on providing answers to the question of drought preparedness or resilience, it has instead posited a series of important questions as recommendations to progress the process toward a living plan; one that is inclusive and endures.

The process looked beyond but was inclusive of drought to understand what disruption means in the context of regional resilience. What was learnt is that regional people from all walks of life whether their role is formal or informal want to live and work in a community setting that is strong and adaptable.

With this understanding the next phase of the MR Plan process seeks to focus on implementation of the MR Plan recommendations. These recommendations have short-term and long-term time frames and require ongoing resourcing and action to provide outcomes.

During this process there was a strong acceptance that a positive way forward is to move beyond a traditional planning paradigm (i.e. a written plan that is not actionable and a plan that does not easily transition to implementation) to an enduring and dynamic process of regional engagement. This process should be guided by agreed resilience principles that can provide a continuing regional voice; a system or mechanism that can accept inputs from top-down and bottom-up system elements and bring these, at times competing elements, closer together to deliver regional outcomes that are effective and transformative into the future.

The agreed principles identified to commence this work are:

- Together Community
- Productive and Collaborative Futures
- Prepared and Proactive
- Leadership in Action.

The MR Plan Project Partners, MRLGA, MRLB and RDAMR and regional community stakeholders, including the voice of local people, recommend that resourcing and funding is identified to build upon the first stage of the MR Plan process and continue this method of engagement, guided by the agreed principles, as the process that builds a “Coalition of the Willing” to continue the valued act of listening to the region.

Attachment A:

Engagement Methodology

OVERVIEW



October 2021

Individual Interviews

28 diverse participants shared their individual views about what is needed to be resilient



November 2021 ongoing...

Community Conversations (Conversation Guide)

300 people and counting...
What can you do yourselves?
Where do you need help?



February 2022

Regional Summit

What does this Plan need to do for you?
Who are you as a region?
How can you control your own destiny?
What does great leadership look like?



March - May 2022

Interest Panels

From what you said that communities need, we will identify region-scale needs to work on to build our resilience



June 2022

Draft the MR Plan



Beyond June 2022

Enduring and evolving resilience system

Attachment A:

Engagement Methodology

PROJECT OVERSIGHT AND LEADERSHIP

Key regional stakeholders, the Murraylands and Riverland Local Government Association (MRLGA), Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board (MRLB) and Regional Development Australia Murraylands and Riverland (RDAMR), identified the need for a regional plan and formed a regional consortium represented as the MR Plan Steering Committee.

A call for submissions was published online along with direct invitations to form the Steering Committee. This Steering Committee was comprised of Chief Executive Officers (or equivalent) from RDAMR, MRLGA, MRLB, one Riverland and one Murraylands Council, one Riverland and one Murraylands Aboriginal representative, one MR community representative, and one MR industry representative, plus the PIRSA Regional Coordinator and an independent Chair.

The Steering Committee, led by an independent Chair, provided agreement for RDAMR to lead the development of the MR Plan through a staged process with the assistance of an independent consultant.

Following a Terms of Reference, the Steering Committee met monthly from August 2021 – June 2022 across the region (where possible in light of Covid-19 impacts) and online to advise the project lead, RDAMR, on consultation, engagement and process to develop the MR Plan.

Independent consultant, democracyCo were appointed by the Steering Committee (following a tender submission process) to undertake detailed project engagement activities aligning with the MR Plan project purpose.

The development of the MR Plan has been guided by the community, activating a ground up approach.

Attachment A:

Engagement Process

REGIONAL INTERVIEWS

In October 2021 we undertook 28 interviews of diverse residents of the region. We sought out people who weren't loud voices, that weren't necessarily prominent community members. We sought people of different ages, from across the region, with different backgrounds, cultures and experiences.

Process:

1. Nominations

Steering Committee members and project partner organisations along with some democracyCo staff – identified people in their personal networks (not professional networks) with an emphasis on identifying everyday people in community who would be less likely to participate in a traditional planning or consultation engagement process. For example, the lady who owns the newsagent, or the coach of their son's football team, their next-door neighbour, someone from their church etc.

Importantly we wanted to interview the 'faces' of the region – a diversity of people from all walks of life.

Approximately 120 people were nominated through this process.

2. Ensuring Diversity

DemocracyCo staff looked across the list and chose 30 that represented a diversity in terms of

- Age
- Gender
- Location (very important – need a regional coverage)
- Sector/type of employment
- Background

Attachment A:

Engagement Process

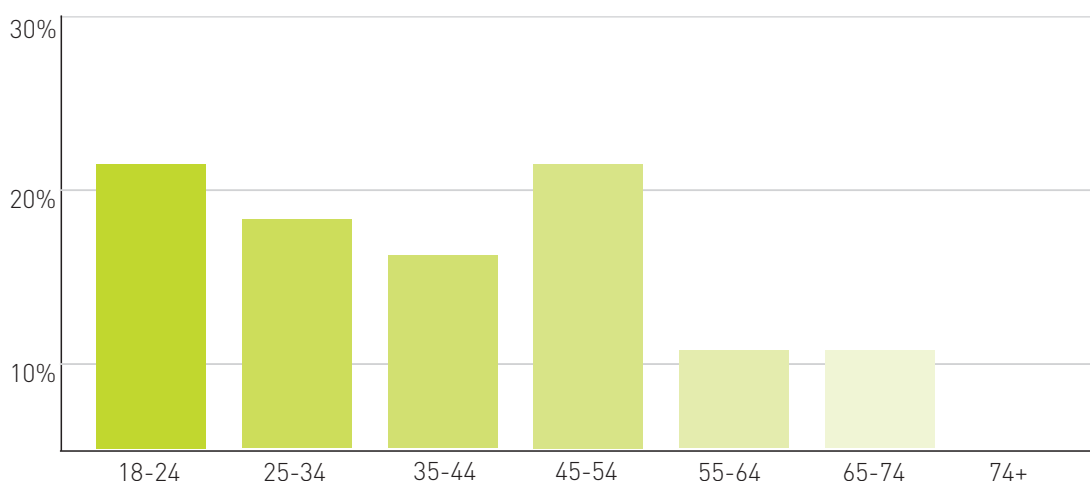
Location of Interviewees



Attachment A:

Engagement Process

Interviewee Age Group



Interviewees by industry

Industry	Number of Interviewees
Agricultural Services	3
Farming/Growing	6
Agricultural Mechanics	1
Arts/Design	2
Education	3
Health	2
Local Government	1
Retail	1
Service Industry	1
Student	2
Tourism	3
Volunteer	1
Other/Not reported	2

3. Interview

DemocracyCo interviewed 28 of those chosen (2 interviews fell through). DemocracyCo asked questions in the following areas:

- Where people call home - their landscape
- About their community - how they connect with their community
- About their work or the work of their family
- What events have caused adversity in the past. How they have dealt with that adversity and what adversity/ disruptive events they expect to experience in the future
- What is in place to assist them during times of adversity and where there are gaps in supports
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of their communities
- What resilience means to them
- What helps them to be resilient?

Attachment A:

Engagement Process

PURPOSE

The interviews were intended to help to prepare and frame the resilience challenge authentically before we embarked on broadscale engagement on this issue.

We needed to know how to frame the issues – so that we could ensure that the initiative strongly resonated with the community – building interest in participation.

We wanted to:

1. Ensure that the process started from a framing of the ‘problem’ consistent with what the community was thinking and feeling - this helped ensure that language was appropriate and supported.
2. Enable deep reflection on the region, its resilience and how its resilience could be improved.
3. Enable us to collect ‘stories’ to create a very human framing for the Community Conversation Guide.
4. Support equitable participation.
5. Enable us to delve deeply into the issues – much deeper than in a workshop.
6. Build trust in the process – by building a group of ambassadors for it.

Attachment A:

Community Conversations

The interviews provided the information required to help us develop a discussion paper “Strong and Adaptable - a Community Conversation Guide for the Murraylands, Mallee and Riverland” ²²

This Guide, the Community Conversation Guide, was framed by the feedback we received from interviewees both in terms of the language used in the document and the content.

In summary the Guide:

- Explained the project and process
- Outlined the key challenges that might create adversity or disruption across the region - as identified by the interviewees
- Provided an overview of what makes the region strong and adaptable - as identified by the interviewees
- Explored the issues that weren't helping resilience in the region as identified by the interviewees
- Stories from two interviewees which highlighted some of the challenges and opportunities to create stronger communities through participation/volunteering/leadership and the benefits this brings communities and to the individuals involved

The Guide then identified key questions enabling and encouraging the broader community to reflect on the most important things that need to be put in place in the region to improve resilience; the gaps in building resilience in the community and the strengths that communities currently have that help them to be more resilient.

The Guide was designed to enable small community groups to come together and discuss their strengths and what they needed to support their resilience.

Any community member could host a Community Conversation and they were supported in doing this by the Host Guide.²³

The Host's role was to organise a group in their community (the groups could be as small or as big as the host felt comfortable with).

²² The Community Conversation Guide can be found here - <https://www.mrplan.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/MRP-Conversation-Guide-WebVersion.pdf>

²³ The Host Guide can be found here - <https://www.mrplan.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/MRP-Host-Guide.pdf>

Attachment A:

Community Conversations

At the time of data analysis 52 groups had participated in a Community Conversation involving over 300 people across the region.

Community Conversations were held with the following groups:

Group	Number
Community Organising Committees	4
Sporting Groups	2
Government Dept or Local Government workplace	7
Industry/Business Groups	8
Schools	5
Service Group (Rotary, CWA or similar)	2
NGOs	1
Church Groups	1
Family Groups	4
Boards	2
Aboriginal Elders	1
Friendship Groups	1

Eleven groups indicated that they were made up of a mix of different types of groups and three opted not to identify their group.

Unfortunately, we only have data on the location of the groups for 18 of the 52 groups (as answering this question was optional).

These 18 groups came from the following areas:

- Murray Bridge
- Jabuk/Geranium
- Mannum
- Karoonda
- Renmark
- Tailem Bend
- Monash (near Berri)

Attachment A:

Community Conversations

COMMUNICATIONS

Obviously, promotions and networking was critical to the success of this stage.

It was vital that we reach out to a diversity of groups across the region and to involve as many people as possible.

To this end the MR Plan Project Team undertook the following promotional activities:

- 1.** Encouraged interviewees to be ambassadors for the project and lead community conversations in their communities.
 - a.** 20 interviewees indicated that they would lead Community Conversations.
- 2.** Soft Launch events across the region involving over 150 individuals demonstrated how to lead a community conversation and empowered individuals to undertake this activity.
- 3.** Steering Committee members hosted their own Community Conversations and assisted others within their networks to facilitate.
- 4.** Organised groups were supported by the Project Team to facilitate community conversations.
- 5.** Regional Summit – 134 registered participants encouraged to lead community conversations.
 - a.** 38 attendees said they were willing to be involved in a Community Conversation.
 - b.** 49 had already taken part or hosted their own.
- 6.** Various social media activity and electronic direct mail via RDAMR channels.
- 7.** Official Media Release distributed across region.
 - a.** Onboarding of local media (print and radio) to share and promote the activity.

PURPOSE

This stage aimed to understand how the community and stakeholders viewed the strengths and the weaknesses of the region's communities – providing us with data that provides a sense of where the opportunities to act are or where the priority areas to act are. This data is the backbone of this strategy and was used by the Leaders Panel and the Interest Groups to develop the Key Objectives, Goals, Priority Areas and Actions for this Resilience Plan.

Three Soft Launch Events were facilitated across the region in Berri, Murray Bridge and Lamerloo to actively demonstrate how a Community Conversation could be conducted. These events were well attended by community, stakeholders and leaders from across the region.

Attachment A:

Regional Summit

The MR Plan Regional Summit was conducted on 18 February 2022 online due to the threat of COVID 19 in the community at that time. 134 individuals from diverse industries and ranging in age from 16-65+ registered for the Regional Summit - from across the region.

THE DESIGN

The MR Plan Regional Summit was designed to be a large scale, whole of region, inclusive event – which highlighted the MR Plan and continued the conversations which had been started in the community about the future and resilience of the region.

Specifically the Regional Summit was designed to enable:

- The community to discuss and set their vision for the future of the region
- Conversations with elected members and aspiring elected members about how that future might be realised
- The community to discuss leadership – both formal and informal – and what it needs to look like – therefore generating data and content which can be used to inform the Interest Panels. It was decided to focus in on this topic due to the significant amount of feedback and discussion in the Community Conversations about leadership, governance, and community engagement/empowerment. Facilitators and the MR Plan project team wanted to unpack the issues in this space further - to gain further insights into the issues and opportunities

DESIGN DRIVERS

The following design drivers were important to the design of the Regional Summit:

- Strong commitment by the Project Partners and the Steering Committee that the **community voice would be central to setting the structure and content of the MR Plan**. Allowing the community to determine the region's priorities for building resilience
- **Building a coalition**. Provide a place/opportunity to bring stakeholders, community, and formal leaders (Federal, State and Local) together in one place to talk about the Plan and how it is best implemented – as the MR Plan intention is to continue regional scale dialogues across organisations and communities, into the long term
- Provide a **catalyst for innovation** – be disruptive, inventive and indicate a new way of working together
- **Maximise community involvement** – and recognise seasonal pressures (seeding, fruit picking etc.) – hence the selected date
- Provide an opportunity for **community voice and regional priorities to be amplified**

Attachment A:

Regional Summit

MR Plan Regional Summit Feedback

In answer to the question “How well did our online format help you connect with others across your region?”

- 31% felt like they were able to connect well with others online
- 61% reported that connecting online was much better than expected
- 6% indicated that it was great to catch up online
- 2% indicated that they felt they couldn't really connect (with others) online

The process was universally enjoyed with - 46% of participants giving the Regional Summit a rating of 5/5. The remaining participants gave the Regional Summit a rating of 4/5.

4 Part Process

1. Entry and Welcome



2. Community Vision Setting



3. Aspiring Leader Dialogues



4. Enabling the Future We Want

PROCESS

The Regional Summit involved 4 'parts':

1. Entry and Welcome

Participants were provided with a high-level introduction to the MR Plan process, and to help build understanding of how the Community Conversation Process and Regional Summit was being used to inform the development of the Plan.

2. Community Vision Setting

We brought in two inspiring speakers to prompt reflection, analysis, and future thinking. Jen Cleary from Centacare and Nathan Woodrow, local entrepreneur, and owner of Ryde Clothing in Renmark.

Jen Cleary's presentation enabled the group to reflect on 'who they are' or rather - who the region is. What really drives the region and how that might be different from people's preconceived notions.

This led into a workshop where small groups brainstormed their vision for the region - starting from the premise of creating a future headline about the region.

Nathan Woodrow followed, inspiring participants with his own story - a journey of innovation, entrepreneurship, and regional collaboration. This supported the workshop session that followed where participants talked in small groups about what great community leadership is, when it's at its best and what is needed to support it?

Attachment A:

Regional Leadership Panel

3. Aspiring Leader Dialogues

All existing and all known aspiring candidates at State and Federal levels, and the mayors of the eight Councils within the region, were invited to attend and pitch their vision for the future of the region and what they would/ could do to achieve this vision.

Eight participated in the process, as follows:

1. Mayor Dave Burgess
2. Mayor Paul Simmons
3. Mayor Peter Hunt
4. The Hon Tony Pasin MP
5. Candidate for Hammond Airlie Keen
6. The Hon Nick McBride MP
7. The Hon Adrian Pederick MP
8. The Hon Tim Whetstone MP

We split the Summit into groups of approximately 10 people with each group having a conversation with a leader about their vision for approximately 10 minutes. The leaders initially pitched their vision for the region and participants were invited to ask questions before moving the leader onto a new group.

It was a high energy and active session – where community had an unprecedented opportunity to hear direct from their existing and aspiring leaders about their visions and intentions. Leaders rotated through a number of groups giving them access to a range of community members.

Leaders' attendance and presentation was supported via a speaker brief that was sent to them in advance and via a leader briefing held online on the day.

Following the dialogue, we asked participants to spend a couple of minutes reflecting on what they heard that excited them and what they heard that concerned them.

4. Enabling the future, we want

Following the leader dialogues, we facilitated an Ideas Bounce – a deep dive discussion into the key issues on governance and leadership that were raised through the Community Conversations.

Participants were broken into five groups and with the support of a facilitator were encouraged to explore the following issues:

- Trusted leaders
- Accessible/embedded leadership
- Decisions making
- Our strongest advocates
- Enabling a vision

Participants were able to move between the online groups to talk about different issues – as they wished.

Content from this session was used to inform the Interest Panels as it developed its section of the MR Plan.

Attachment A:

Regional Leadership Panel

The Regional Leadership Panel, comprised of 12 diverse participants, looked across “prioritised areas” developed by democracyCo through our analysis of the Community Conversations, Regional Summit, and Interviews to see if they agreed with the prioritised area and develop rough wording for the Goal and Objectives to define and focus the prioritised area.

Each prioritised area then became the focus of an Interest Panel.

Preparation for the Regional Leadership Panel

DemocracyCo undertook the initial analysis of the Community Conversations feedback and the Interview and Regional Summit data.

Data was prioritised based on the number of responses coming through Community Conversation - seeking to identify the highest rating data based on the number of conversations. Low ranking data was not provided to the Regional Leadership Panel to ensure that low prioritised issues were not included in the next stage of prioritisation.²⁴

We documented and demonstrated how we arrived at the prioritised list to the Regional Leadership Panel.

We used a thematic analysis process for analysing the data from the Community Conversations. We used a semantic approach where we analysed the explicit content of the data (people’s stated opinions/ideas). A data analytical tool called NVivo assisted with this analysis, allowing us to easily read, code, organise and rearrange our data as required.

It also allowed us to quickly call out specific inquiries from the data and to represent the data in various visual formats.

The process of analysis involved several stages:

- Familiarisation with the data – reading across what is there to gain an overview
- Coding – grouping together common ideas/ opinions into codes
- Theming– grouping together codes that contain similar ideas that formed several areas
- Reviewing – do the areas make sense? Is there anything that is missing or in the wrong place?
- Recoding/shifting – anything that made more sense in another area or theme

At this stage we did not name the four areas that emerged from this analysis.

²⁴ Note - to ensure that the Plan is focused on what the priority issues are for the region - we don’t want very low-ranking issues to be prioritised highly or in effect ‘water down’ the focus on areas of importance.

Attachment A:

Regional Leadership Panel

Participation and Recruitment

The Regional Leadership Panel was made up of 12 participants including:

- MR Plan Steering Committee members
- Tanya Lehman, Aurora Meliora Pty Ltd, Leadership and Culture Change Consultant
- Regional leaders from the Drought Resilience Leaders Program,
- RDAMR staff members

The Drought Resilience Leaders Program is a national Federal Government program delivered by The Australian Rural Leadership Foundation, designed to equip people working in or with rural, regional, and remote communities with skills to lead their communities into the future.

Attachment A:

Regional Leadership Panel

PROCESS AND PRODUCT

The group met for 3.5 hours to analyse the data from the Community Conversations and develop the scope and brief for four Interest Panels.

The session started with the group being introduced to the data and a data familiarisation workshop. The group then worked to develop a draft Goal Statement and Objectives for each of the draft prioritised areas.

To do this the group started by checking the organisation of the data from the Community Conversations, to make sure that they were happy with where we had grouped codes and how we had arranged the themes. They decided to leave the data as we had arranged it and proceeded to name the four areas that we had created.

The final four areas and their themes as outlined in their brief to the Interest Panels was as follows:

1. Productive and Collaborative Futures

- a. Business supports
- b. Industry collaboration
- c. Diverse industries
- d. Labour and employment
- e. Innovation and research
- f. Skills and training
- g. Water security

2. Leadership in Action

- a. Bottom-up, informed community governance
- b. Connected and strong governance
- c. Leadership support and development
- d. Supporting community initiatives
- e. Young people in government

3. Together Community

- a. Connected and collaborative communities
- b. Community groups
- c. Community qualities
- d. Community resources
- e. Health and wellbeing
- f. Knowledge sharing

4. Prepared and Proactive

- a. Crisis prevention and management
- b. Plan and action

These groupings and the draft goal and objectives were then provided to each of the respective Interest Panels to start their deliberations.

Attachment A:

Interest Panels

Four Interest Panels were convened to deeply explore the four prioritised areas as developed by the Regional Leadership Panel upon consideration and reflection of democracyCo's analysis of the Community Conversation feedback.

The four Interest Panels were as follows:

1. Productive and Collaborative Futures
2. Leadership in Action
3. Together Community
4. Prepared and Proactive

ROLE

The role of each Interest Panel was to:

- Define the interest area by finalising the goal (as started by the Regional Leaders Panel as outlined above) and the outcomes
- Explain how the priority area will contribute to resilience for the region (why it is a priority area)
- Explore what is happening already in relation to the goal to ensure that recommended actions fill gaps/are important areas of need
- Detail what needs to stop happening to achieve the goal
- Recommend a limited number of actions under the goal for their respective Interest Panel
- Consider and explore impacts on various groups within each goal for example Aboriginal, youth, and vulnerable

Attachment A:

Interest Panels

PARTICIPATION AND RECRUITMENT

56 people participated on the four Interest Panels. Each Interest Panel met three times and came together once to review the completed draft Plan.

An open invitation to register to participate in the Interest Panels was extended to the public and all participants involved in the process to date were invited to register their interest to participate.

This was promoted by:

- Personal invitation to the interviewees and we encouraged them to share with their networks/contacts
- Personal invitation to identified Key Stakeholders and identified community leaders
- Directly at the conclusion of the Regional Summit
- Email invitations to register extended to all who had attended the initial Soft Launch Events and Regional Summit
- Email invitations to those who has registered to stay informed about the process
- Online links hosted on the dedicated MR Plan website (www.mrplan.com.au)
- Social media activity
- RDAMR monthly eNews

The Launch process - discussed earlier was also central to building relationships with key stakeholders and influencers in the community that we wanted to engage with the process and participate in it.

In addition, the RDAMR Project Team, Project Partners, Steering Committee and democracyCo met to identify key stakeholders that needed to be involved in each of the Interest Panels.

Key to the consideration of key stakeholders to directly approach and encourage their participation:

- Level of interest of stakeholders
- Critical and creative thinkers
- Emerging leaders
- Experience/knowledge held by the stakeholder that was central to successful development of recommendations
- Ability to influence
- Desire to implement/lead implementation of the recommendations

Attachment A:

Interest Panels

PROCESS OVERVIEW

The Interest Panel process was conducted online over Zoom across three sessions, and facilitated by democracyCo. Whilst each Interest Panel was unique, the generic facilitation approach for each is described in the diagram below.

Session 1 2hrs 30 mins	Session 2 3hrs	Session 3 3hrs
Introductions	Re-entry and reflections	Recap of the draft recommendations
Understanding the task	Gaze raising workshop – with either Professor Jim Cavaye or Professor Fiona Kerr – a session to think system-wide	View across all Interest Panels – to see alignment and identify any gaps
Introduction to the Community Conversations data and reflections on what the data is telling us	Identifying game changing system level recommendations for the Plan	Feedback provided from the Project Partners on the draft recommendations
Brainstorming potential ideas for the MR Plan	Recommendation development (who it would benefit, why it matters, what needs to be unlocked to make their support resilience)	Improvements – making improvements to the draft recommendations
Confirmation of goals and objectives of our Interest Panel	Consensus on recommendation suite	Considering what's already in place to support recommendations
		Consensus work to finalise recommendations to go forward into the Plan

Attachment A:

Where did the content for the Plan come from?

Murraylands and Riverland Plan written and developed by:

Background	DemocracyCo.
Process	DemocracyCo.
Vision for the Region	Interviews, Community Conversations, Regional Summit and Interest Panels.
Regional Identity (Who we are)	Community Conversations, Regional Summit and Interest Panels.
Climate change and drought	RDAMR - taken from MRLB, PIRSA and Federal Government research/data.
Principles of resilience	Community Conversations, Regional Leaders and Interest Panels.
Priorities for Resilience Intervention and Action	Some early framing of the goal and outcomes were drafted by a group of Regional Leaders - these were then finalised by the relevant Interest Panels with support from democracyCo developed - using data from Community Conversations and the Regional Summit.
Implementation of the Plan: What next, what now?	Coalition of the Willing.

Attachment B:

Number of Participants

More than 550 diverse individuals have actively contributed to the development of the MR Plan through direct involvement and the ongoing engagement process.

This includes:

- 3 Partnering Regional Organisations
- 11 Steering Committee Members
- 28 Regional Interviewees
- 157 Attendees across three separate Soft Launch Events
- 134 Regional Summit Participants
- 8 Aspiring Leaders
- 12 Regional Leadership Program Participants
- 5 Resilience Experts
- 58 Contributors across four Regional Interest Panels
- 52 Community Conversation Hosts
- 300+ Community Conversation Participants

Attachment C:

What programs are working? What do we want to keep?

The Interest Panels identified the following programs as successfully supporting the Resilience of the Region.

The following initiatives were identified as supporting the region in diversifying its economic base:

- Regional Development Strategy, PIRSA
- State Growth Agenda, DPC
- MRLGA Water Position Paper
- Regional Plan - PDI Act
- Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy
- ThincLab Loxton
- International Services, Business SA
- Industry Advocate
- Industry Leaders Fund
- FFW CRC - Circular Economy education pilot, FFW CRC/RDAMR
- Benefits of Circular Economy to Regional South Australia, GISA/RDAMR/RDALC
- AGRI Food Tourism Program, Federal Government/RDAMR
- Riverland Ag Workforce Program, DIIS/RDAMR/mteSA

The following initiatives were identified as supporting the region in becoming a “region of choice”:

- Regional Development Strategy
- State Growth Agenda
- MRLGA Water Position Paper
- Regional Plan - PDI Act
- Local Jobs Program - Murray and South East
- Women in Business and Regional Development Group
- Jobs 4 Murraylands and Riverland
- AGRI Food Tourism Program
- Flinders University Rural and Remote Health
- Aboriginal Learning On Country Program

Attachment C:

What programs are working? What do we want to keep?

Connecting our communities

The following initiatives were identified as playing a vital role in supporting our community to be connected and inclusive:

- Technology - elderly can teach the old ways and young can teach technology. Example of gaming community - local version. Bridging generation gap. Learning from each other. Technology is an 'in' for youth
- Sport - provides a significant opportunity for communities to connect
- Our Town - initiative of the Fay Fuller Foundation to empower rural and regional communities to build new capabilities to meet the mental health challenges they face, both now and into the future
- Local government Youth Action Committees to ensure youth inclusion and promote constructive youth empowerment
- Riverland Youth Theatre - the stretch and reach of this organisation is impressive with little funding. Young aboriginal people with dance and art
- Parts of things - arts organisation
- SAASTA - South Australian Aboriginal Secondary Training Academy. Used to be sports academy using sports as the hook for education. Now they focus on culture. PLP is there, research project is there. Sport is still there. Hugely successful with Aboriginal youth and staff. Great model
- Mimini's group
- Men's group
- Elders Group
- Ski for life - a group focused within the Murraylands and Riverland committed to raising awareness and promoting mental health, wellbeing and suicide prevention

Attachment D:

Stocktake of current initiatives that support the principles

As part of the Interest Panel process participants identified current initiatives in the region which they assessed as being important for supporting the principles.

You can view/download a full list of these initiatives using the link below.

<http://www.mrplan.com.au/MRPattachmentD>

The Murraylands and Riverland Plan



This project is part of the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program and is funded through the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund and the Government of South Australia.

Regional Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Guide

Regional Drought Resilience (RDR) Plans
South Australia



Government of South Australia
Department of Primary Industries
and Regions

Regional Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Guide

Information current as of 9 November 2023

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Background

The Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program (the program) is one of eight foundational programs under the Future Drought Fund (FDF). The program provides funding for consortia of regional partners to develop Regional Drought Resilience Plans (RDR Plans) that identify and guide actions to build a region's resilience to future droughts. The RDR Plans explore and focus on innovative and diverse pathways to build drought resilience in agriculture, primary production, and agriculture supply chain industries.

As part of the Program Implementation Plan of the RDR Planning Program, the state has drafted a Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Plan (MERP). The purpose of this document is to serve as a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) guide that aligns to that MERP and describe how regional stakeholders in South Australia can monitor, evaluate, and report on the actions identified in their RDR Plans.

This MEL guide will also align regional-level outcomes with the program-level outcomes described in the RDR Planning Program MERP and outline how learnings will drive continuous improvement.

The short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes of the actions described in the RDR Plans are expected to align with the RDR Planning Program outcomes; these have been highlighted in the program logic (Table 2) as actions supporting regional resilience.

This MEL guide aims to outline monitoring and evaluation activities that will:

- Assess the outcomes or impacts of the programs or activities initiated as a result of RDR Plans (i.e., a result-focused evaluation).
- Evaluate the implementation of the activities against each of the thematic areas described in the RDR Plans (i.e., a process evaluation).
- Evaluate the design of the RDR Plans and its impact on achieving expected outcomes (i.e., a design evaluation).

A program evaluation can encompass one or more of these types of evaluations.

In developing this MEL guide, the following basic principles have been considered:

- A focus on **user-friendly** – simple language, easy to understand, and efficient to implement
- **'Need-to-know' information** – ensuring time and resources are not used to capture unnecessary data
- Allowance for **variance in data collection**.

Evaluation purpose

The evaluation of the RDR Plans will aim to:

- Outline steps to guide evaluation of the thematic areas and actions based on the RDR Plans and the expected M&E activities for each.
- Specify the expected roles and responsibilities of different regional stakeholders in monitoring and evaluating the action plans in the RDR Plans.
- Demonstrate how the national-level FDF outcomes are aligned with the expected short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes of the actions described in the RDR Plans. It also describes how the outcomes will be achieved over time.

- Support continuous improvement and inform future priorities around drought resilience in the regions.
- Ensure that the consortia and regional stakeholders have a shared understanding of how outcomes will be monitored.
- Provide a level of transparency for stakeholders in implementing actions and the expected outcomes.

Evaluation scope

Table 1, Evaluation scope, describes what parts of the program are being evaluated. As regions design their own MEL plans, stakeholders may elect to keep the evaluation scope broad or refine it to have a narrower focus; however, each regional evaluation will cover the medium-term and long-term outcomes against the actions listed in the RDR Plans. To support this, regions will identify implementation, monitoring, and evaluation timeframes against each of the actions in their RDR Plans. Regions will be supported by planning resources provided by the RDR Program and PIRSA in setting up their monitoring and evaluation timeframes and approaches.

Regional stakeholders will be expected to assess the actions listed in their RDR Plans through a series of indicators based on the outcomes described in the measurement framework (Table 3) and evaluation framework (Table 4). These indicators will serve as metrics by which the regions will monitor and evaluate progress and performance against each action described in their RDR Plans, including medium and long-term outcomes. However, it's important to note that this activity will be dependent on the resources available to regional stakeholders over time.

The collection of data against the measures or indicators will start at the beginning of the implementation of the actions described in the RDR Plans; however, regional stakeholders may decide on the time frame for the evaluation framework. The evaluation also depends on the duration of the implementation of the actions in the RDR Plans. The state has provided some monitoring and evaluation approaches in Tables 3 and 4 for the regional stakeholders to consider measuring the short-term and medium-term outcomes.

Also, as most of the long-term outcomes align with the long-term outcomes of the RDR Planning Program, these may be better evaluated at the national level via national-level statistics. Therefore, the long-term outcome may not be evaluated by the regional stakeholders.

Table 1. Evaluation scope

In scope	Out of scope
Activities/programs related to any of the actions plans or thematic areas described in the RDR Plans and implemented by any of the regional stakeholders.	Activities/action plans not listed in the RDR Plans
Mid-term review	The collective impact of [theme] initiatives, policies, and programs
Opportunities and challenges for improvement and learning, including informing future priorities	Activities/outputs the state reports on under the MERP

Program Logic

The program logic is a hierarchy of expected outcomes at different time periods. As seen in the example in Table 2, a program logic outlines cause-and-effect relationships between the actions/activities, outputs, short-term outcomes, medium-term outcomes and longer-term desired outcomes.

It is expected that regional stakeholders will develop a program logic that includes actions in their plans and identify how they contribute to short/medium and long-term outcomes. Table 2 is an example of the prescribed format.

Table 2. Program logic – Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program

INPUTS	ACTIONS	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
Socially connected and resilient regional communities				
Funding Staffing Partners and stakeholders (national/state governments, SA Health, governance committee agencies related to mental health and wellbeing)	Coordinate and expand community-led mental health and wellbeing support initiatives. Advocate for visiting and outreach mental health services.	Improvement in the capacity of the regional communities to deal with mental health challenges. Availability of mental health and wellbeing support within the regions. Improved access to health care services within the regions. Increase in the number of community member receiving the required mental health support.	Improved resilience and wellbeing of regional communities and primary producers. A better connected and integrated community. Sustainable community led initiatives to deal with mental health issues and a permanent infrastructure available for the community in the time of drought/stress. Improved community connections/linkage with the available support.	Socially resilience communities who have the right connections, infrastructure and ways to remain resilient before, during or after any kind of natural or climate change incidents (drought, floods etc.) Stronger connectedness and greater social capital within communities, contributing to wellbeing and security .
Economically resilience and vibrant primary enterprises				
Funding Staffing Partners and stakeholders (national/state governments, governance committee agencies related to primary production)	Assist primary producers to transit from farm operations to carbon neutral (e.g., electrify machinery, carbon farming etc.) Prioritise and promote Natural Sequence Farming principles to slow water movement and store water better where it falls. Further education of primary producers and improving their access to regionally located education and training services.	Improved business knowledge, focused business direction and business planning skills. Increase awareness of primary producers around carbon neutral/farming techniques and other innovative farming techniques. Improved awareness and knowledge of primary producers around business acumen, strategic planning and farm risk management. Communities use relevant data and information to better understand their resilience to drought and plan for resilience to drought.	Improved strategic business planning capacity of primary producers. Improved risk management capacity of primary producers to take farm related decisions in the face of adverse climate event. Regional representatives have considered and planned incremental, transitional, and transformational opportunities to strengthen resilience. Regional leaders are in a stronger position to implement strategic actions, adapt to change and take advantage of opportunities to build economic resilience as they arise.	Communities implement transformative activities that improve their resilience to drought.

(Note: The outcomes in **BOLD ITALIC** are derived from the MERP of the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program. Remaining short/medium and long-term outcomes are suggested by the state/PIRSA.)

How does the program logic work?

As an example, in Table 2, regional stakeholders may intend to implement two actions around mental health and well-being from the program logic (Inputs). The implementation of the Actions will improve regional communities' access to mental health care services within their regions (Short-Term Outcomes).

As a result, the regional communities will start accessing those services, which will then result in improving their wellbeing and resilience (Medium-Term Outcomes). The Long-Term Outcome will then be socially resilient communities that have the right connections, infrastructure, and ways to remain resilient before, during, or after any kind of natural or climate change incident.

It is noted that there will be other actions that will support the same outcomes at each level.

Program Measurement Framework

The Program Measurement Framework is directly aligned with the program logic. Measurement or monitoring is described as the ongoing process of collecting routine data (numbers and stories) that is usually done, or at least managed, by the people implementing the program. Measurement occurs at different levels and can include measuring high-level measures as well as medium- and short-term-level measures. The purpose of measurement is to generate insights, define progress, and support evaluation.

Table 3 includes the outcomes from program logic at different levels. However, the measures and indicators are suggestions from the state program and regional stakeholders may tailor them to suit their regional plans.

The monitoring and evaluation approaches are described and suggested to the regional stakeholders; however, the regions are open to choosing any approach that suits their actions as well as their time and resources.

Table 3. Program Measurement Framework

Level of change	Outcomes from the program logic	Indicators/measures	Monitoring and evaluation approaches
Level 1: Short-Term Outcomes	<p>Improvement in the capacity of regional communities to deal with mental health challenges.</p> <p>Availability of mental health and wellbeing support within the regions.</p> <p>Improved access to health care services within the regions.</p> <p>Increase in the number of community members receiving the required mental health support.</p>	<p>Number of events (session, workshop, training etc.) organised and the number of participants who participated in those events.</p> <p>Feedback of the participants about the usefulness and value of the events/agencies.</p> <p>Type of mental health support provided to the community members.</p> <p>Number of wellbeing support providers (agencies and health and wellbeing personals).</p> <p>Number of people accessing the mental health and well-being service.</p>	<p>Approaches to be adopted by regions:</p> <p>The participants who participated in the initiatives can be surveyed to get their responses and the extent to which the activities enabled them to increase their awareness, knowledge and skill levels as a result of their participation in the initiatives or interventions. In order to see the change in their awareness, knowledge or skill level it is recommended to conduct a pre-/ post-activity survey.</p> <p>The number of activities (sessions/ events/ training programs) implemented can be recorded by the implementing regional stakeholder.</p> <p>The number of participants who accessed the mental health support and the type of support provided can be taken from the implementing regional stakeholder.</p>
	<p>Improved business knowledge, focused business direction and business planning skills.</p> <p>Increase awareness by primary producers around carbon neutral/farming techniques and other innovative farming techniques.</p> <p>Improved awareness and knowledge of primary producers around business acumen, strategic planning and farm risk management.</p> <p><i>Communities use relevant data and information to better understand their resilience to drought and plan for resilience to drought.</i></p>	<p>Number of primary producers who participated in the business planning and financial literacy sessions or any other event.</p> <p>Number of primary producers who participated in the session/ events around carbon neutral/ farming techniques and other innovative farming methods.</p> <p>Awareness and knowledge level of the primary around carbon neutral/ farming techniques and other innovative farming methods.</p> <p>Type of relevant data and information provided the communities.</p> <p>Number of projects/ programs started in collaboration with government and other non-government agencies.</p> <p>Feedback of the participants around the programs and the impact of the programs.</p>	
Level 2: Medium-Term Outcomes	<p>Improved resilience and wellbeing of regional communities and primary producers.</p> <p>A better-connected and integrated community.</p> <p>Sustainable community led initiatives to deal with mental health issues and a permanent infrastructure available for the community in the time of drought/ stress.</p> <p><i>Improved community connections/ linkage with the available support.</i></p>	<p>Number and type of stakeholders engaged per region.</p> <p>The proportion of participants who self-reported an improvement in their health and wellbeing and community resilience.</p> <p>Proportion of community members accessed relevant information and linked with the available services/service providers.</p> <p>Feedback by participants.</p>	<p>Approaches to be adopted by regions:</p> <p>As regions implement initiatives against the action plans they will be responsible for collecting information against the outcomes.</p> <p>Option 1:</p> <p>Information about the outcomes may be best captured through consultative sessions or focus group discussions with the implementation partners to capture the results or impact of the interventions.</p>

	<p>Improved strategic business planning capacity of primary producers.</p> <p>Improved risk management capacity of primary producers to make farm-related decisions in the face of adverse climate events.</p> <p><i>Regional representatives have considered and planned incremental, transitional, and transformational opportunities to strengthen resilience.</i></p> <p><i>Regional leaders are in a stronger position to implement strategic actions, adapt to change and take advantage of opportunities to build economic resilience as they arise.</i></p>	<p>Proportion of participants who self-reported an improvement in their business acumen and decision-making skill (against a rubric) and evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants perception about an improvement in their confidence level, decision-making skills, financial understanding, people/self-management skills, risk management skill and improved future direction. • Proportion of participants who intend to review and upgrade their farm business plans. • Proportion of participants who intend to bring change in the farm as a result of their participation in the program. • Proportion of primary producers who reported an improvement in their mental, financial and technical skills to management adverse events. 	<p>The evaluation approach and criteria would include components from the results evaluation and process evaluation.</p> <p>The data collected (participants' surveys, registrations, and feedback data) against the short-term outcomes can also be used to respond to and support the medium-term outcomes.</p> <p>Option 2: Another way of capturing the result is the case study approach, or the Most Significant Change (MSC) approach, where the program participants are asked to provide their responses to what they would regard as the most significant change in their social or economic situation as a result of their participation in the programs or activities.</p>
<p>Level 3: Long-Term Outcomes (4+ years)</p>	<p>Socially resilient communities who have the right connections, infrastructure and ways to remain resilient before, during or after any kind of natural or climate change incidents (drought, floods etc.)</p> <p><i>Stronger connectedness and greater social capital within communities, contributing to wellbeing and security.</i></p> <p><i>Communities implement transformative activities that improve their resilience to drought.</i></p>	<p>Regions/ states to identify any lead/ early evidence of or precursors to long-term outcomes that are suitable to their program and include data in outcome reporting.</p>	<p>These long-term outcomes are best captured at national level by the federal government through separate evaluation studies and other national statistics.</p>

(Note: The outcomes in **BOLD** and **ITALIC** are derived from the MEL Plan of the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program. Remaining short/medium and long-term outcomes are suggested by the state/PIRSA.)

Evaluation and learning strategy

The purpose and scope of the evaluation have been described above. The Evaluation Framework in Table 4 describes the evaluation questions, measures, and proposed methods that regions may adopt to get information about the measures. It's important to note that the information in Table 4 is an example based on the first two actions or interventions from the program logic, which are related to mental health and wellbeing. Also, the broader evaluation questions cover effectiveness, impact and contribution criteria whereas the results-based evaluation approach has been considered. The consortia or regions can select their own approach and criteria based on their needs and requirements however it must align to this MEL guide. Further, the regions may elect to include more evaluation questions and measures according to their needs, interests, and reporting requirements to other funders.

Based on the criteria and evaluation approach, the regional stakeholders may learn from the measurement and evaluation data. The measurement data can be used to improve the programs or actions being implemented and to implement such programs in the future.

The MEL data can also be used to demonstrate progress and results for accountability purposes, indicating whether the set targets were achieved or not and whether the implementation approach worked or not. Further data will enable assessment of achievements of the program outcomes or results. The measurement and evaluation data may also be used to establish a knowledge base for future programming and investment. The information may be used as a guide to collect information about other interventions.

Further, it's expected that the consortia will start the collection of information from the start of the implementation of the actions and programs, which will add to the value of the evaluation and support the qualitative information gathered via facilitated discussions or case studies. Some key evaluation questions are given below for the regions or consortia to consider.

Key Evaluation Questions

Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) to demonstrate the impact and outcomes of the actions in the program logic (Table 2) are provided below. The regions are expected to include the first three KEQs in their MEL plans and can include more KEQs based on their needs or other requirements.

- How appropriate were the program governance arrangements?
- To what extent did the [program/intervention] result in [long term outcome]?
- To what extent did the [program/intervention] meet industry needs?
- To what extent did the [program] achieve the right balance between centralization of some activities and achieve economies of scale whilst also being responsive to industry needs and conditions? (where applicable)
- How effective was the [program] in preventing [as examples price escalation/intervention of market forces/access to resources]? (where applicable)

Table 4. Evaluation Framework

Key evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Measures	Proposed measurement methods	Who/what and when
How effective was the program in achieving its intended outputs and outcomes?	<p>To what extent have the programs or actions improved the resilience and wellbeing of regional communities?</p> <p>Is there any improvement in the number of communities receiving wellbeing and mental health support?</p> <p>Is there any change in the available support system for the community to deal with mental stress?</p> <p>Is there any improvement in the social connections within the communities or linkage between farm businesses?</p> <p>Did the program improve the connections between the regional communities?</p>	<p>Feedback from the regional communities/ program participants around the improvement in their resilience levels as a result of their participation in the program/activities.</p> <p>Number and type of programs/ support implemented around mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Number of available wellbeing support services available before the program and after the program.</p> <p>Type of wellbeing support services available to the community and number of community members who availed those opportunities.</p> <p>Any formal or information linkages developed between various groups in regions (i.e., linkages between farm businesses or any local group)</p>	<p>The monitoring/ measurement data can be used to respond to these measures – it is pertinent to collect data from the start of any intervention or program.</p> <p>Alternatively, facilitated discussions can be organised and ask questions related to the measures from the regional communities or the participants who participated in programs/ activities.</p> <p>Case studies can be used to demonstrate results against some of the evaluation questions.</p>	<p>The regions/ consortia members will be responsible for conducting this evaluation and most probably by the end of the program/ intervention. It would also depend on the duration of the programs.</p> <p>The information against some of the measures will be collected as part of the measurement framework or via the ongoing monitoring process.</p>
How appropriate was the implementation process?	<p>Was the implementation process clear and well received by the targeted stakeholders?</p>	<p>Satisfaction level of the program participants regarding the overall implementation process of the rebate.</p> <p>Feedback of the program participant regarding the overall implementation process of the program.</p>		
To what extent did the program contribute to the high-level impacts, and what other things helped or hindered?	<p>To what extent the regional communities including the farm producers consider themselves and their farm business resilient to any kind of climate change incidents (i.e., droughts, bushfire etc.)</p> <p>To what extent did the program improve the social and economic conditions of the regional communities including the farm producers?</p>	<p>Proportion of program participants including the farm producers who considers themselves resilient. (i.e., social resilience, environmental and financial resilient)</p> <p>Examples of economic social or environmental benefits experienced by the regional communities including the farm producers.</p> <p>Improve resilience and preparedness.</p>		