



Australian Government  
Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry



National  
Farmers  
Federation

# 2025 National Drought Forum

8-9 September 2025 | Gawler, South Australia



## Forum program

The 2025 National Drought Forum will build on the insights of previous forums and play a crucial role in ensuring that our approach to drought preparedness, response and recovery remains effective and meets the needs of our farmers and rural and regional communities. With parts of southern Australia experiencing drought, it's important to discuss our approach to managing drought at a national level.

This year's program has been shaped to reflect current and future drought priorities, including an opportunity to examine existing policies and programs, and issues such as mental health and wellbeing, climate change and food security.

## Welcome to the 2025 National Drought Forum

**Julie Collins MP, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

Welcome to the 2025 National Drought Forum.

It is a privilege to bring together such a diverse range of stakeholders to explore the current and emerging challenges facing drought policy. From peak industry bodies, sector leaders, Indigenous representatives, community organisations, financial institutions, unions, through to all levels of government.

This forum is a collaborative platform to share insights, challenge assumptions, and strengthen our collective approach to how we manage drought in Australia. We know that drought is not a question of if, but when. That is why proactive, inclusive, and enduring policy is essential.

The Albanese Labor Government remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting farmers and regional communities – before, during, and after drought.

Our support programs are always available, and we enable individuals to choose the assistance they need, when they need it. Initiatives like the Rural Financial Counselling Service, Farm Household Allowance, Regional Investment Corporation loans, and Farm Management Deposits provide critical financial support to those who access it.

Through the \$5 billion Future Drought Fund, we are investing in long-term preparedness – building the capacity of our agricultural sector. This includes innovation, infrastructure, and community-led solutions that ensure farming remains viable and vibrant into the future.

This forum is an important opportunity to bring together voices from across the drought policy landscape to ensure our policies reflect the challenges of today, and the aspirations of those who live and work in our regions.

The Albanese Labor Government will always stand up for our farmers, producers, and regional and rural communities.

That is why I look forward to the many productive discussions that will be had at the 2025 National Drought Forum.

To find out more about drought assistance, visit [drought.gov.au](https://drought.gov.au).

### **David Jochinke, President, National Farmers' Federation**

As Australian agriculture drives toward its \$100 billion goal, drought preparedness must remain front and centre. Drought is part of life for farm businesses and regional, rural and remote communities, but it shouldn't be a sentence to hardship. Farmers are no strangers to risk. They plan for tough seasons, but when droughts stretch across years, farmers and communities need tools to stay afloat, recover and prepare for the next one.

With climate change making droughts more frequent and severe, we can't afford to wait until the dust hits the fan. Our renewed drought policy, released earlier this year, sets a clear path for national action, built on preparedness, risk management and shared responsibility between industry and Government.

The National Drought Forum brings together the right people at the right time. Government, industry and communities all have a role in ensuring drought policy is practical, proactive and grounded in lived experience.

We thank DAFF for leading the forum again, and to all attendees for being part of this important conversation as an opportunity to support agriculture's preparedness. Let's get to work.

## Monday, 8 September 2025

### **Optional site visit**

Time	Description
9:00 am to 12:15 pm	<b>South Australian Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub Site visit</b> The tour to Roseworthy provides an opportunity for forum attendees to visit 2 Future Drought Fund drought-resilience research, development and adoption sites devoted to broadacre cropping and livestock production.

## Day 1: Drought in context

Gawler Civic Centre, 1:00 to 5:00 pm

Session	Time	Description
Opening plenary	12:15 to 12:55 pm	Registration and light refreshments
	1:00 to 2:30 pm	<b>Open and housekeeping</b> Adam Fennessey, Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry <b>Welcome to Country</b> Cliffy Wilson <b>Opening address</b> The Hon Julie Collins MP, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry <b>National Farmers' Federation welcome</b> David Jochinke, President, National Farmers' Federation <b>Bureau of Meteorology Update</b> Andrew Jones, General Manager Agriculture and Water, Bureau of Meteorology <b>In conversation: Our current drought context</b> Chair: Adam Fennessey Panel includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mel Brown, First Assistant Secretary, Farm Resilience Division, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</li> <li>David Jochinke, President, National Farmers' Federation</li> <li>Caroline Rhodes, CEO, Primary Producers South Australia</li> <li>Prof Mehdi Doroudi PSM, Chief Executive, Department of Primary Industries and Regions, South Australia</li> <li>Dougal Purcell, Executive Director, Agriculture Sector Development and Services, Agriculture Victoria</li> </ul>
	2:30 to 3:00 pm	Afternoon tea
Workshop and closing plenary	3:00 to 4:45 pm	<b>Workshop: Reflecting on our drought framework</b> Facilitator: Tanya Lehmann Explore, reflect and provide insights on how we approach drought in Australia through our policies, programs and settings.
	4:45 to 5:00 pm	Wrap-up and close Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm, Assistant Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

## Tuesday, 9 September 2025

## Day 2: Drought engagement

Gawler Civic Centre, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

Session	Time	Description
Opening plenary	9:00 to 9:30 am	Day 2 opening remarks
Morning breakout activities	9:30 to 11:00 am	<b>Workshop: Strengthening mental wellbeing and preventing suicides through drought</b> Room: James Martin Room Facilitator: Tanya Lehmann Confirming the short and long-term objectives, appropriate support types and roles and responsibilities for mental health, wellbeing and suicide prevention across the drought cycle.

## 2025 National Drought Forum

Session	Time	Description
		<p><b>Panel: Farming futures and the challenge of transition</b></p> <p>Room: Council Chamber</p> <p>Examine key farm business transition and family succession challenges faced by Australian farmers impacted by drought and consider options to overcome these challenges.</p> <p>Chair: Chris Young, General Manager, Trade and Economics, National Farmers' Federation</p> <p>Panel includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isobel Knight, Director, ProAgitive</li> <li>• Chris Warrick, Chair, RFCS Victoria West</li> <li>• Peta Ward, National General Manager, Regional &amp; Agribusiness, Westpac</li> <li>• John Howard, CEO, Regional Investment Corporation (RIC)</li> <li>• Jock Barnett, 2025 Nuffield Drought Resilience Scholar, Nuffield Australia</li> </ul>
		<p><b>Panel: Drought as a catalyst for change</b></p> <p>Room: Institute Hall</p> <p>Explore the opportunities drought provides for reflection on 'What worked, what didn't and what could be done differently next time?' and how these learnings can inform risk management and decision-making at all levels, now and over the medium and long term.</p> <p>Chair: Ashley Herbert, Member, Future Drought Fund Consultative Committee</p> <p>Panel includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr Jared Greenville, Executive Director, ABARES</li> <li>• Dr Stephen Lee, Director, South Australian Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub</li> <li>• Tas Ian Loane, Drought Resilience Coordinator, TasFarmers</li> <li>• Carissa Buckland, Director Corporate Affairs &amp; Marketing, NutrienAg Solutions</li> </ul>
	11:00 to 11:30 am	Morning tea
Midday breakout activities	11:30 am to 1:00 pm	<p><b>Workshop: The pathway out of drought</b></p> <p>Room: James Martin Room</p> <p>Explore and share insights on how we can all best support recovery.</p> <p>Introduction by Lucinda Corrigan, Member, Future Drought Fund Consultative Committee</p> <p>Reflections from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alex Zimmerman, South Australian Commissioner for Drought Support</li> <li>• Peter Tuohey, Rural Assistance Commissioner, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action</li> </ul>
		<p><b>Panel: Foundations of community resilience</b></p> <p>Room: Council Chamber</p> <p>Hear insights on the key elements that make a community resilient to drought and other challenges, the pathways to increasing community resilience, the importance of people and networks, and how government can best support community resilience.</p> <p>Chair: Matt Linnegar, Chief Executive, Australian Rural Leadership Foundation</p> <p>Panel includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professor Jacki Schirmer, Director, Centre for Environmental Governance, University of Canberra</li> <li>• Ian Hamm, Chair, Future Drought Fund First Nations Advisory Group</li> <li>• Jennifer Lynch, CEO, Regional Development Australia - Barossa Gawler Light Adelaide Plains</li> </ul>

## 2025 National Drought Forum

Session	Time	Description
		<b>Workshop: Drought and the future of food security</b> Room: Institute Hall Explore the implications for food security in a future of climate extremes and drought. Discover direct and indirect consequences to help uncover innovative ideas and potential policy solutions that seek to ensure resilient food and agricultural systems.
	1:00 to 2:00 pm	Lunch
Plenary and closing	2:00 to 3:15 pm	<b>Panel: Drought in a changing climate</b> Room: Institute Hall Discuss the efficacy of current drought policies across government and industry in the context of current drought conditions and future climate scenarios. Chair: Brent Finlay, Chair, Future Drought Fund Consultative Committee Panel includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Katie McRobert, Executive Director, Australian Farm Institute</li> <li>• Brett Hosking, Vice President, Victorian Farmers' Federation</li> <li>• Andrea Tschirner, Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator, South Australian Arid Lands Landscape Board</li> <li>• Josh Gilbert, Member, Future Drought Fund Consultative Committee</li> <li>• Peter Donaghey, General Manager Agribusiness Operations, Department of Primary Industries, Queensland</li> </ul>
	3:15 to 4:00 pm	<b>Wrap-up and closing remarks</b> What we've heard and what's next.

**Acknowledgement of Country**

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the National Farmers' Federation would like to acknowledge that the 2025 National Drought Forum is being held on Kurna Country. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of this land, their culture, their language and Elders both past and present. We recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries, and forestry industries.

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