

# National Drought Agreement

## Annual Report 2019-20



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# Preface

This is the first formal annual report <sup>1</sup> of the National Drought Agreement (NDA), signed between the Commonwealth of Australia (the Australian Government) and the Australian states and territories.

In keeping with the reporting obligations set out in clauses 12-16 of the NDA, progress reports will be developed annually, or as required by the governing bodies. Progress reports will cover the previous financial year and will use the reporting framework agreed by the Agriculture Ministers on 22 February 2021.

The 2019-20 Annual Report provides an overview of national progress on implementing the NDA and covers the period from December 2018 to June 2020. The publishing of the report was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which was agreed to by all parties.

This first annual report will establish a baseline for data, against which progress will be monitored in future reports. The next annual report will be released at the end of 2021 and will report on the period of July 2020 to June 2021.

The National Recovery and Resilience Agency, formerly known as the National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency, has led on developing the first NDA annual report. With the announcement of the new National Recovery and Resilience Agency on 5 May 2021, responsibility of NDA annual reporting will be assumed by the Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment after 30 June 2021.

## Background to the NDA

On 12 December 2018, the Australian Government and the Australian states and territories, being the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia<sup>2</sup>, signed the NDA. The NDA replaces the 2013 Intergovernmental Agreement on National Drought Program Reform and operates until 30 June 2024.

The NDA focuses on long-term preparedness, sustainability, resilience and risk management for farming businesses and farming communities in Australia. The NDA encourages Australian governments to cooperate and collaborate on drought-related programs and initiatives and outlines responsibilities when supporting farming businesses, families and communities. In doing so, the NDA provides a collaborative jurisdictional framework that manages drought risk in a consistent manner across Australia. It supports reduced duplication in program delivery between jurisdictions and enables shared monitoring and reporting on the progress of each jurisdiction's efforts.

The NDA is governed and reported on through existing jurisdictional forums—the Agriculture Senior Officials Committee (AGSOC) and the Agriculture Ministers' Meeting (AMM).

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<sup>1</sup> An interim report on the NDA was provided to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in March 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Where the terms 'jurisdictions' or 'parties' are used, these refer to the Australian Government and all Australian states and territories.





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# Message from the Agriculture Ministers

Our farmers are driving the success of the Australian agriculture sector with the value of production in 2019-20 hitting \$66 billion<sup>3</sup>. This success was realised despite 2019 being our warmest and driest year on record, with maximum temperatures well above their historical averages. For some places, the onset of the drought less than 10 years after the Millennium Drought, intensified the social and economic impacts on regional communities. The impacts of protracted drought were compounded by flood, bushfires and a pandemic. Governments have provided an unprecedented level of critical and immediate on-ground support and investment in response to the crippling effects of drought. All Australians should be proud of our farmers' efforts to provide secure supplies of high-quality food and fibre despite these conditions.

The agriculture sector's success in hard times is thanks in large part to the resilience, innovation and hard work of our farming families and their communities. It also speaks to the importance of our shared efforts - by farmers, communities, governments, charities and the private sector - to address the complexity of drought, and its impacts, across the country.

While we are holding strong in the face of adversity, prosperity can never be taken for granted. We must continue to work together to ensure farmers and communities have the right tools to prepare for and manage through the next drought.

In entering into the NDA, jurisdictions committed to continuing the drought reform agenda and working together to help farming businesses, families and communities manage and prepare for future challenges in a variable and changing climate. Effective support is important to help people respond to tough times better.

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<sup>3</sup> Total gross value of farm, fisheries and forestry production in Australia. ABARES, Agricultural commodities: March quarter 2021.



It is central to ensuring drought does not undermine the productive capacity or economic potential of regional Australia. It is also vital to supporting the social fabric of regional communities, who inevitably feel the brunt of droughts.

At the time of writing this report, we have continued to see rainfall deficiencies ease across large parts of the country. Our next NDA Annual Report will likely be drafted from a very different starting point. However, there is no better time to prepare for drought than when it's raining. It is in the coming years that we will really see the resilience and preparedness focus of the NDA come into its own. It is important that we use this time as an opportunity to lay solid foundations that help Australian agriculture to flourish and reach its full potential under all circumstances.

We remain committed to working within the principles of the NDA to support Australian farmers, families and communities to manage through all phases of drought, and to seeing the continued success of the Australian agricultural sector.



**Hon David Littleproud MP,**  
Minister for Agriculture and Northern Australia



**Hon Adam John Marshall MP,**  
Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales



**Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP,**  
Minister for Agriculture



**Hon Mark Furner MP,**  
Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and  
Minister for Rural Communities



**Hon Alannah MacTiernan MLC,**  
Minister for Regional Development, Agriculture and Food, and Hydrogen Industry



**Hon David Basham MP,**  
Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development



**Hon Guy Barnett MP,**  
Minister for Primary Industries and Water



**Ms Rebecca Vasserotti MLA,**  
Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Sustainable Building and Construction



**Hon Nicole Manison MLA,**  
Minister for Agribusiness and Aquaculture

# 1. Executive Summary

The inaugural NDA Annual Report demonstrates that Australian governments have taken significant steps to support farmers and communities dealing with drought. Bureau of Meteorology data demonstrated that 2019 was one of the hottest and driest years ever recorded and many parts of the country experienced serious or severe rainfall deficiencies, which affected volume of production. Farm production is estimated to have contracted by around six per cent between 2016-17 and 2019-20<sup>4</sup> while summer crops declined by 62 per cent in 2019-20<sup>5</sup>.

During the reporting period, the jurisdictions have worked diligently towards delivering on the agreed outcomes and meeting their respective roles and responsibilities under the NDA. While the rate of implementation has been influenced by each jurisdiction's broader history, approach to drought policy and the needs of their constituents, all jurisdictions have delivered positive benefits to farmers and the communities that depend on them.

In accordance with the NDA, the jurisdictions have prioritised programs and initiatives that emphasise long-term preparedness, sustainability, resilience and risk management practices. They have delivered capacity-building programs to support farmers to build business skills, budgeting and financial literacy and on-farm activities related to land, water and stock management. All jurisdictions were able to form collaborations with governments, non-government organisations and industry to provide programs that increased regional service offerings and contributed to community resilience, local leadership, and health and wellbeing. These are clear steps to move towards nationally consistent and complementary drought policies and programs.

In 2019-20, the Australian Government demonstrated national leadership by creating the National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency (the Agency) to provide a more coordinated and collaborative approach at the height of the drought. The Australian Government also set up the \$5 billion Future Drought Fund (FDF). Farming businesses, families and communities also continue to be supported through times of hardship through Australian Government measures, such as the Farm Household Allowance (FHA) and Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS).

All jurisdictions have reported to be on track to deliver their roles and responsibilities under the NDA. Of particular note is the commitment during this reporting period to increase support to primary producers and communities experiencing drought hardship, while maintaining their ongoing investments to build better preparedness and resilience for the future.

With the increase in activity since the signing of the NDA, there is raised risk of duplication, administrative inefficiencies and confusion on the ground. While there have been strong efforts across the jurisdictions to share information and data about drought programs, and some good coordination mechanisms established, there is a need for continued focus. Most jurisdictions have instigated review and evaluation of their drought

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4 ABARES Agricultural Commodities: March quarter 2020 p. 3

5 Grain Central, June 10, 2020 <https://www.graincentral.com/news/winter-crop-production-forecast-to-jump-53pc-abares/>



programs, the learnings from which should help inform opportunities for improvement in drought assistance going forward.

This first NDA annual report has identified a number of areas for improvement, where collaborative effort should be prioritised.

1. It has highlighted gaps and limitations in the data available to report against the proposed measures in the NDA reporting framework. Learnings from this initial report should be used to review how information is collected and reported against the NDA for future reporting periods.
2. Providing clarity to end users about available support in any specific place or at any point in time is complicated by the fact that each jurisdiction employs different methodologies to classify or declare drought, and there is little guidance available for policy makers about when the impacts of drought 'start' and 'stop' at particular points in time. While complicated, there would be benefit in working towards greater inter-jurisdictional consistency in the criteria to define drought and inform government intervention on drought assistance.
3. Urgent need experienced by stakeholders during this reporting period has resulted in a strong reaction from governments and the proliferation of a large number of measures to help. This has generated administrative inefficiencies and, in some cases, confusion on the ground. While many parts of the country move into recovery from drought, it provides opportunity to improve the way we work during times of drought; to rationalise, streamline and simplify support, in order to prepare for the next drought.
4. During the reporting period – and acknowledging the significant disruptions to business caused by the COVID-19 pandemic – the focus of the AMM Working Group on Drought has been dominated by developing and agreeing the reporting framework for the NDA. A more substantive forward agenda for the working group, focused on program and policy, would better serve the intent of Outcome 5 and the NDA more broadly.
5. It is noted that the self-assessment process has resulted in extremely positive progress ratings across the board, and the objectivity of this review may be scrutinised. However, it is also possible that the positive ratings resulted from the significant commitment made by governments in response to the worst of the most recent drought. There is potential benefit in considering alternative means of assessment and reporting, such as independent external evaluations, as part of the review of the NDA in 2022-23.

The parties will work towards addressing these priorities and report on progress through future NDA Annual Reports. These areas for improvement will also be considered in the context of the NDA review process in 2022-23.

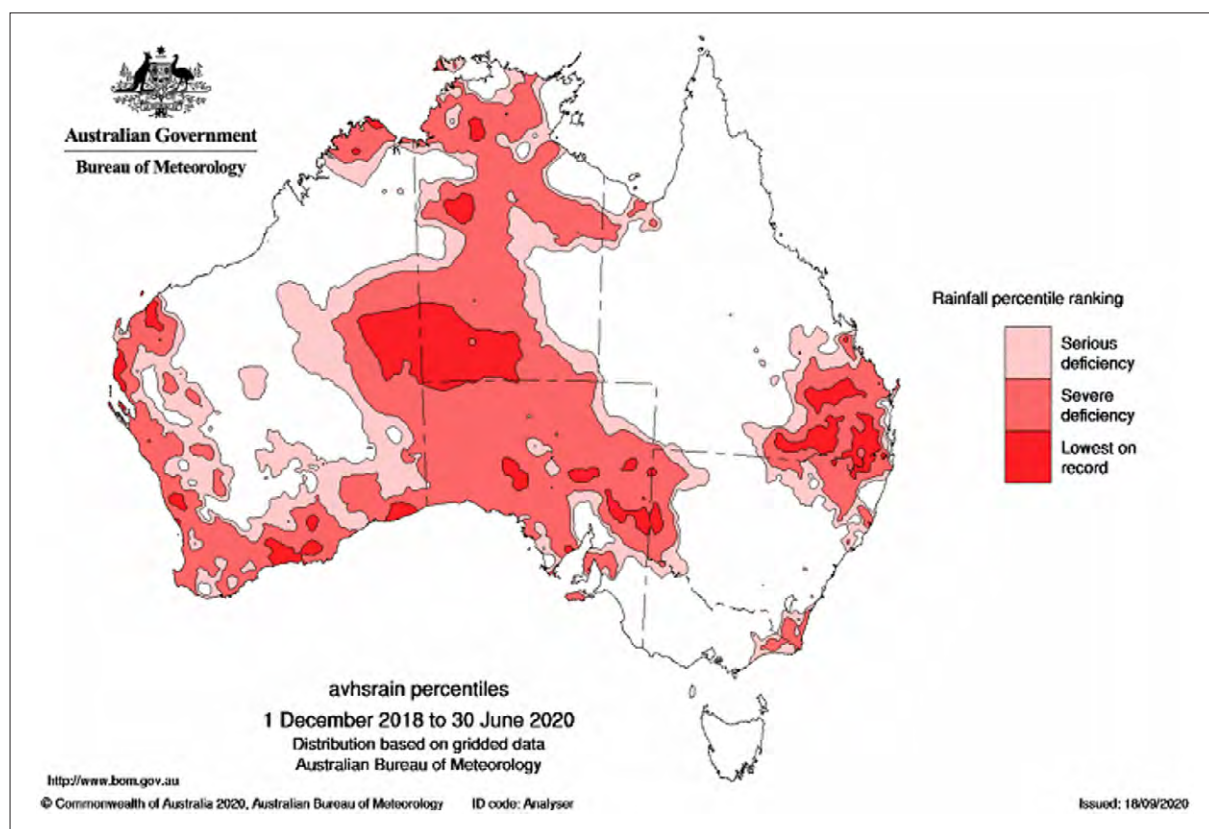


## 2. The Climatic Context

This reporting period has been marked by extreme and prolonged drought conditions across Australia. 2019-2020 has been a time not only of low rainfall, but also high temperatures and high evaporation, leading to very rapid drying of the landscape. 2019 was Australia's warmest and driest calendar year on record, with all jurisdictions recording maximum temperatures in the top five warmest years since records began in 1910.

For the 19 month period from 1 December 2018 to 30 June 2020, both serious (lowest 10 per cent of historical rainfall totals) and severe (lowest 5 per cent of historical rainfall totals) rainfall deficiencies were experienced across many parts of Australia (Bureau of Meteorology 2020). Persistently dry, hot conditions also saw below average soil moisture in the plant root zone, and significant depletion of water storages.

Australian rainfall deficiencies, December 2018 to June 2020



Source: Bureau of Meteorology

Rainfall from February to April 2020 brought some relief to the eastern seaboard. Rainfall deficiency reduced considerably for the total area of New South Wales and Queensland. In New South Wales, rainfall deficiency reduced from 83 per cent over the December 2018 to December 2019 period, to 33 per cent at June 2020. In Queensland, the deficiency reduced from 34 per cent to 21 per cent for the same period. The central and northern areas of the Murray Darling Basin returned to more average soil moisture.

## Australian Government Investment

**34%**

In-drought support

As at 30 June 2020, the Australian Government has committed approximately

**\$9 billion**

to drought response, recovery and preparedness, since 2018-19

**58%**

Enhancing long-term resilience

**8%**

Supporting communities

### In-drought support

- Farm Household Allowance: **\$415 million**
- Rural Financial Counselling Service: **\$5 million**
- Drought Communities Small Business Support Program: **\$7 million**
- Drought Community Support Initiative: **\$181.5 million**
- Drought Community Outreach Program: **\$10 million**
- Country Women's Association (June 2019 grant): **\$5 million**
- FarmHub (managed by National Farmers' Federation): **\$774,400**
- Regional Investment Corporation loans: **\$2 billion**
- Bureau of Meteorology radars: **\$77.2 million**
- Regional weather and climate guides to help with on-farm decision making: **\$2.7 million**
- Improving Great Artesian Basin Drought Resilience: **\$27.6 million**
- Accelerated depreciation for fodder storage assets: **\$75 million** (Foregone revenue estimate)
- On-farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme: **\$50 million**
- Water for Fodder: **\$98 million**
- Empowering our Communities, Trusted Advocates, Connecting Youth Awareness-raising Initiative and Telehealth Services: **\$29.88 million**
- Communities Combating Pests and Weed Impacts During Drought Program: **\$25 million**
- National Drought Map: **\$4.2 million**

### Supporting communities

- Drought Communities Programme Extension: **\$301 million**
- Drought Communities Program Extension – Roads to Recovery: **\$138.85 million**
- Building Better Regions Fund: **\$200 million**
- Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal: **\$15 million**
- Education Special Circumstances: **\$20 million**
- Community Child Care Fund: **\$5 million**

### Enhancing long-term resilience

- Future Drought Fund: **\$5 billion**
- National Water Grid Authority: **\$100 million**



### 3. Outcomes of the NDA

The NDA guides individual and collaborative work towards seven agreed outcomes. The report presents a national picture of how jurisdictions are collectively progressing outcomes and meeting the roles and responsibilities of the NDA, identifying shared areas for improvement.

This first annual report establishes a baseline for data, against which progress will be monitored in future reports.

The seven outcomes of the NDA are:

1. Farming businesses have an improved capability to manage business risks and the tools to implement sustainable and resilient risk management practices.
2. Farming businesses, industry service providers, agri-finance, community organisations and local government are partners of government and support rural communities to prepare for, and respond to, drought.
3. Farming businesses, farming families and farming communities are supported in times of hardship and have an increased understanding of, and access to, available support.
4. Roles and responsibilities of jurisdictions in responding to drought:
  - a. are clear;
  - b. promote consistency of drought policy and reform objectives;
  - c. complement drought preparedness, response and recovery programs; and
  - d. reduce gaps and unnecessary duplication.
5. Improved sharing, and quality, of common sources of data and information across jurisdictions to strengthen policy and business decision making.
6. Future programs related to the objectives of this agreement are consistent with the principles for reform at Attachment A of the NDA.
7. Future programs providing temporary in-drought support are consistent with the principles and processes at Attachment B of the NDA.

#### THINGS TO IMPROVE

The first annual reporting process has highlighted gaps and limitations in the data available to report against the proposed measures in the NDA reporting framework. Learnings from this initial report should be used to review how information is collected and reported against the NDA for future reporting periods.

In particular it should be noted that, for this report, data provided in Section 3 refers to Australian Government programs only unless otherwise specified. Inconsistencies in data at jurisdictional levels prevented aggregation for this reporting period.



## OUTCOME 1:

Farming businesses have an improved capability to manage business risks and the tools to implement sustainable and resilient risk management practices.



Drought is an enduring feature of the Australian landscape. There is a need to deliberately plan and prepare for drought, particularly when it's raining, so that all stakeholders – governments, businesses and communities - make sure we are ready for the next time it's dry. If we do this well we can reduce the impacts of drought on Australian farmers and make it easier to recover. This is important not just for our farmers; it is key to ensuring Australian agriculture can be more productive and profitable, maintaining our hard-won international market access, and enhancing the prosperity and wellbeing of our regional communities. The NDA explicitly commits jurisdictions to a reform agenda that prioritises effort and investment in drought resilience and preparedness, in order to reduce the need for in-drought support. There will always be a role for government in providing a safety net for farmers and communities that are doing it tough. However, if we invest in helping people and communities to better manage through drought and recover from it with fewer impacts, everyone wins.

Indicator	Measure	2019-20 Report Data
Farm businesses enhance their productivity and performance during drought	Climate adjusted farm profit (farm profit under drought conditions)	Climate adjusted farm profit <sup>6</sup> : \$103,730 (Drought year), \$164,940 (Normal Year)
	Climate adjusted total factor productivity (TFP under drought conditions)	Total Factor Productivity (TFP) growth for the <u>cropping industry</u> was -22.5% in 2019-20, but adjusting for seasonal volatility and climate effects, TFP growth was -4.9%. <sup>7</sup>  Total Factor Productivity (TFP) growth for the <u>broadacre industries</u> was -9.6% in 2019-20, but adjusting for seasonal volatility and climate effects, TFP growth was -2.4%. <sup>8</sup>

6 Based on ABARES AAGIS data and *farmpredict* model. The averages are based on data from 2016 to 2020 on broadacre farms. This data was funded by the Future Drought Fund.

7 Measures of productivity can be cyclical, and when inferring technological change, is best measured over longer periods. Climate adjusted TFP growth was 1.5% per year on average from 2014-15 to present, 1.7% per year from 2009-10 to present, and 1.4% from 1999-2000 to present. This data was funded by the Future Drought Fund.

8 Measures of productivity can be cyclical, and when inferring technological change, is best measured over longer periods. Climate adjusted TFP growth was -0.5% per year on average from 2014-15 to present, -0.1% per year from 2009-10 to present, and 0.4% from 1999-2000 to present. This data was funded by the Future Drought Fund.

Indicator	Measure	2019-20 Report Data
Farm businesses enhance their management of financial risk	% change in farm household income during drought (ABARES Drought Vulnerability Indicator)	Average drought risk on average farm household income <sup>9</sup> : 5.14%
	% change in farm profit during drought (ABARES Drought Vulnerability Indicator)	Average drought risk on farm profit <sup>10</sup> : 37.11%
	% income from off-farm activities	% income of farmers from off-farm activities <sup>11</sup> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small farms (less than \$250,000 turnover): 75%</li> <li>• Medium farms (\$250,000-\$750,000): 31%</li> <li>• Large farms (\$750,000 to \$2,000,000): 7%</li> <li>• Very large farms (&gt; \$2,000,000): 2%</li> </ul>
	Value of Farm Management Deposit holdings and number of holders	Accumulated value <sup>12</sup> : \$6,493,710,000 Number of accounts <sup>13</sup> : 49,269

#### Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARES) Analysis of Data

- Farmers have experienced improvements in commodity prices in recent years particularly for livestock products. A combination of productivity growth, better prices and increases in farm size have resulted in an upward trend in farm profits over the last decade (at least until the droughts of 2018-19 and 2019-20).
- Average farm profit drought risk has increased in recent years, due to an increase in drought sensitivity within the livestock sector. This largely reflects the impact of an extended run of poor conditions in many livestock farming areas since 2015-16, which has led to reductions in beef cattle and sheep stocking rates, and to hay and grain holdings which, at least in the short-run, increases the drought risk faced by these farms (Hughes et al. 2020). Despite these trends, household income drought risk has remained relatively stable overtime, due largely to an increase in average farm size, which reduces the likelihood of low farm household incomes (see Hughes et al. 2020).
- ABARES data has also shown that despite generally worsening climate conditions for farmers in Australia, they have demonstrated adaptation and benefited from improvements in technology, management decision software and financial tools such as Farm Management Deposits. These advancements, amongst others, have led to long term productivity growth in the Australian industry. Australian farms have achieved productivity growth despite worsening climate conditions, implying that Australian farmers are generally adapting to increasingly challenging conditions.

9 ABARES *farmpredict* model. ABARES estimates of drought risk for Australian broadacre farms. Drought risk is defined as % change between normal and drought years. Data measured across 2014-19. ABARES Measuring drought risk report. November 2020. This data was funded by the Future Drought Fund.

10 ABARES *farmpredict* model. ABARES estimates of drought risk for Australian broadacre farms. Drought risk is defined as % change between normal and drought years. Data measured across 2014-19. ABARES Measuring drought risk report. November 2020. This data was funded by the Future Drought Fund.

11 Based on preliminary estimates and on average income per farm for 2019-20. ABARES Australian Agricultural and Grazing Industries Survey. This data was funded by the Future Drought Fund.

12 As at 30 June 2020, Department of Agriculture, Water & Environment. The value of deposits reported may be greater than the actual level recorded here as primary producers may choose not to claim a tax deduction for all deposits held in FMD accounts.

13 As at 30 June 2020, Department of Agriculture, Water & Environment. The total number of accounts does not indicate the number of primary producers participating in the FMD scheme as a primary producer may hold multiple FMD accounts.



Indicator	Measure	2019-20 Report Data
Provision of in-drought, transaction-based subsidies provided by jurisdictions is reduced	Value of transactional subsidy programs and number and value of payments to farmers	Insufficient data available.  NOTE: On 29 May 2020, ABARES released a research report – Analysis of Government Support for Australian Agricultural Producers. The report found that Australian farmers are some of the least subsidised in the world, with benefits for productivity, overall sector growth and international market participation and competitiveness. Where direct farm support is provided, it is concentrated on risk management tools to help manage Australia's uniquely variable climate.
Farm businesses undertake better business planning for drought	% farmers who agreed that 'on our farm, we have a plan in place for the next drought'	% farmers who agreed that 'on our farm, we have a plan in place for the next drought' <sup>14</sup> : 33.7%
	% farmers who agreed that 'on our farm, we regularly draw on our planning to make decisions about the business'	% farmers who agreed that 'on our farm, we regularly draw on our planning to make decisions about the business' <sup>15</sup> : 32.2%
	Number of people accessing farm business planning and management programs	FHA Activity Supplement <sup>16</sup> : 2,100 people Rural Financial Counselling Service <sup>17</sup> : 7,100 clients

14 2018 Regional Wellbeing Survey datasets, University of Canberra

15 2018 Regional Wellbeing Survey datasets, University of Canberra

16 2019-20, Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment. Note that Activity Supplement data includes but is not limited to farm business planning and management.

17 2019-20, RFCS Portal 15 March 2021

## CASE STUDY

### New pasture species feeds sheep industry growth (Western Australia)

A new drought tolerant pasture legume species developed by the Western Australian (WA) Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) and launched in 2018 has the potential to make livestock production in the WA Wheatbelt more resilient and profitable.

*Lanza tедера* is a hardy, highly nutritious perennial with nitrogen-fixing qualities, which can provide a valuable feed option for livestock producers to fill feed gaps during the season. The pasture grows all year round and can easily be adapted to continuous or rotation grazing requirements, enabling sheep producers to target out-of-season premium market opportunities.

The WA government spent twelve years developing *Lanza tедера* after sourcing the original seed from the Spanish island of Lanzarote. Researchers have tested the plant's performance extensively in glasshouse and field trials, from which a supporting agronomic package was developed to optimize the variety's performance. Long term livestock grazing trials were also undertaken to evaluate the plant's nutritional value and application, which has shown great promise for sheep and no animal health issues.

*Lanza tедера* was developed as part of DPIRD's pasture species breeding program in association with the Plant Based Solutions for Dryland Salinity Cooperative Research Centre, which later became the Future Farm Industries Cooperative Research Centre. Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) have also invested in the development of the animal production and agronomic packages.

The first commercial *Lanza tедера* seed has been made available for 2019 and is distributed via the wholesale partner Landmark.





## OUTCOME 2:

Farming businesses, industry service providers, agri-finance, community organisations and local government are partners of government and support rural communities to prepare for, and respond to, drought.

Drought impacts Australians in different ways. Everyone has a part to play in responding to, managing, and preparing for drought. This includes government and industry, individual farmers and businesses, the private sector, the finance sector, charities, and our research community. Collaboration in drought preparedness, response and recovery, provides for consistency of drought policy and reform objectives and helps to ensure efforts are not unnecessarily duplicated or critical issues overlooked. Importantly, it also helps us to realise complementarity in our work.





Indicator	Measure	2019-20 Report Data
Rural stakeholders coordinate, cooperate and collaborate in support of drought preparedness and resilience, and in response to drought.	Governments regularly share and seek advice on drought conditions, impacts and measures through organised networks	<p>Number of Minister's Drought Roundtables held<sup>18</sup>: 3</p> <p>Number of Drought Communications &amp; Engagement Cross-Agency Group meetings held<sup>19</sup>: 4</p> <p>All jurisdictions participate in the Agricultural Senior Officials Committee (AGSOC) meetings and the Agricultural Ministers' Meeting (AMM). Most of the jurisdictions also report through their own jurisdictional level coordination mechanisms.</p> <p>WA: Grower Group Alliance (GGA), WA Local Government Association (WALGA)</p> <p>VIC: Drought Interdepartmental Co-ordination Group, Regional Drought Coordinators, the Rural Assistance Commissioner (RAC), regional specific seasonal conditions committees.</p> <p>SA: Dry Condition Working Group, health and charity working groups, drought community action groups, bank forums, working group with farming systems organisation, Regional Coordinators</p> <p>QLD: Drought Industry Coordination Group</p> <p>NSW: Drought Hub, Local Land Services officers network</p> <p>NT: Pastoral Industry Advisory Committees, Northern Australia Climate Program Network, Departmental Rangelands Officers, Livestock Extension Officers and Stock Inspectors</p> <p>TAS: Forum of Rural Stakeholders (FoRS) convened by Rural Business Tasmania</p> <p>ACT: Rural Landholders Association, Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator, direct support information sessions</p>
	Governments form partnerships with other governments and non-government bodies to build drought preparedness and resilience, and deliver in-drought support	All jurisdictions report drought support measures implemented through partnership arrangements with other government and non-government bodies.

<sup>18</sup> From March 2019 to June 2020. National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency.

<sup>19</sup> Number of meeting held since the National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency.

## CASE STUDY

### **Catchment Management Authority (CMA) Drought Employment Program (Victoria)**

The Victorian Government worked in partnership with the East Gippsland, Mallee and Goulburn CMA's to deliver the Drought Employment Program (the Program) in East Gippsland, the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District and far North West Victoria. The Program was part of the Victorian Government's Drought Response package and provided full and part-time employment to drought affected farmers and farm workers suffering financial hardship as a result of drought.

The Mallee Program supported over 25 participants that cumulatively achieved 11,602 hours of work between 10 local project partners. Participants range from 19 to 72 years old, with 23 per cent identifying as female and 77 per cent as male.

Through the Program the participants completed almost 2,000 ha of invasive weed control, erection of 25 km of fencing and removal of tonnes of litter from public land near the Murray River. In addition to the on-ground works, participants were supported with various training opportunities, such as remote first aid training, chemcert training, cultural heritage training and biodiversity and environmental education training.

Some said that the Program was a great learning experience; others said the Program put food on their family's table; and many participants said it saved them from debilitating depression. "It's saved us" said Rob, a participant in the Mallee CMA program. "You've got everything going out ... when a bill comes in you pay it, then you pay the next one, but during a drought like this, you've got nothing coming in" Robert said.



## OUTCOME 3:

Farming businesses, farming families and farming communities are supported in times of hardship and have an increased understanding of, and access to, available support.



While the NDA prioritises preparedness, it acknowledges there will be times when farmers, regional businesses, families and communities need support. There will always be a role for governments to provide a safety net for people who are doing it tough and all parties remain committed to providing support for those that are affected by drought. Importantly, this includes making sure that support is not only available, but understood and accessible.

Indicator	Measure	2019-20 Report Data
Farming businesses, families and communities access support during times of hardship.	Number of farm businesses or families accessing services during times of hardship	FHA Payments <sup>20</sup> : 10,900 farmers and their partners (over 3,700 <sup>21</sup> of those granted in the 2019-20 financial year), delivering over \$134 million to recipients in the 2019-20 financial year.  Rural Financial Counselling Service <sup>22</sup> : 7,100 clients
	Communities accessing stimulus measures	Total number of LGAs accessing Australian Government community in-drought support: 230 <sup>23</sup>  \$265 million spent across six different Australian Government community stimulus measures <sup>24</sup>
Farming businesses, families and communities access available support programs	Number of people accessing information channels that hold information on support measures	Number of registered Farmhub users <sup>25</sup> : 69,487 Number of Farmhub page views <sup>26</sup> : 341,396

20 2019-20, Services Australia SAP Hana 31 March 2021

21 2019-20, Services Australia 26 February 2021

22 2019-20, RFCS Portal 15 March 2021

23 This number includes the 180 DCPE eligible LGAs, plus LGAs not eligible for DCPE but received funding under BBRF, FRRR and CCCF. DESE has confirmed no schools outside DCPE eligible LGAs received ESC funding.

24 From 2018-19 to 30 June 2020. Includes Drought Communities Programme Extension (DCPE), DCPE Roads to Recovery, Building Better Regions Fund Round 4, Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal's Tackling Tough Times Together program, Education Special Circumstances and Community Child Care Fund

25 As at 30 June 2020, National Farmers Federation

26 As at 30 June 2020, National Farmers Federation



## THINGS TO IMPROVE

Providing clarity to end users about available support in any specific place or at any point in time is complicated by the fact that each jurisdiction employs different methodologies to classify or declare drought, and there is little guidance available for policy makers about when the impacts of drought 'start' and 'stop'. While complicated, there would be benefit in working towards greater inter-jurisdictional consistency in criteria to define drought and inform government intervention on drought assistance.



Similarly, the urgent needs experienced by stakeholders during this reporting period has resulted in a strong reaction from governments and the proliferation of a large number of measures to help. This has generated administrative inefficiencies and, in some cases, confusion on the ground. While many parts of the country move into recovery from drought, it provides opportunity to improve the way we work during times of drought—to rationalise, streamline and simplify support, in order to prepare for the next drought.



## CASE STUDY

### Family and Business Support Program (South Australia)

Drought can be a major source of uncertainty, stress and anxiety for farmers and their communities. The Family and Business Support (FaBS) program has funded an experienced team of regionally based professionals to provide non-clinical counselling support and business support to farmers and where appropriate refer them to relevant government or industry support services. These FaBS mentors help address a critical support gap by connecting those affected by drought and other adverse events to available financial and mental health services, local health networks, government and non-government assistance, as well as community organisations and donations.

This service has ensured that farming businesses have improved capability to manage business risk, and farming businesses are supported in times of hardship and have an increased understanding of, and access to available support.

The FaBS Program has been delivered by PIRSA since 2018. The program is funded through South Australia's \$21 million Drought Support Package. The South Australian Government committed \$838,000 in funding to the program for the 2019/20 financial year, and \$854,000 for the 2020/21 financial year.

There have been up to 14 FaBS mentors working across South Australia during the period, with 9 supporting drought and 5 supporting bushfire affected communities. As of 30 June 2020, 211 individuals had directly accessed drought support through the program, and FaBS mentors had attended over 100 community drought events to provide additional informal support.





## CASE STUDY

### Young Farmer Business Program (New South Wales)

The Young Farmer Business Program empowers young people in NSW to run profitable and resilient farming and fishing businesses and has been a \$6m Drought Strategy investment over four years. The program helps young farmers and fishers develop sound business skills and withstand shocks to their business, including drought, and reduce their need for government support in the future. Since July 2017, the program has hosted more than 100 skill building events, reaching over 4,000 young farmers and fishers whose belief in their capacity to make good business decisions has increased by 75 per cent.



The program offers a wide range of resources including online downloadable business templates, strong social media platforms where young people engage, and more recently, podcasts on topics young farmers and fishers have chosen, with more than 16,000 listens in 12 months.

The program has provided grants for young farmer groups to conduct events and field days that build business skills, has subsidised business courses, and hosted a conference which attracted 300 young farmers and fishers from across NSW. The program has also provided 1 on 1 business coaching and a wide variety of workshops both face-to-face and online.

The program has been effective in helping young business owners during drought conditions, with these endorsements being just a sample of the program's broad impact:

- A young farmer said that without the Young Farmer Business Program business coaching they would have quit farming during the 2019 drought.
- Encouraged and prepared by their Young Farmer Business Program coach, a young farmer convinced their bank to reduce their mortgage interest rate by almost 0.5 per cent, saving them over \$30,000 pa.
- Two young farmers prepared for future drought by purchasing large silos, conserving feed from the current season, and monitoring hay prices in anticipation of buying additional feed when prices are low. Both farmers said that they would have lacked the confidence to make such big decisions without the Young Farmer Business Program coach.

*"In drought we were paying \$2.20 per head per week [to feed sheep], the silo will cut us back to \$0.40 per week during dry times. We spent \$300k on the silos. We can also use them to buy feed when it's cheap and on sell it." Young farmer*

*"The coaching course has given me a kick up the behind, to take great value in my personal and family needs, and to develop our business to cater for these needs. Whilst pushing for professionalism through all aspects of the business, I have been learning to be more effective, not only IN the business, but ON our business." Young fisher*



## OUTCOME 4:

**Roles and responsibilities of jurisdictions in responding to drought: i) are clear; ii) promote consistency of drought policy and reform objectives; iii) complement drought preparedness, response and recovery programs; and iv) reduce gaps and unnecessary duplication.**



Indicator	Measure	2019-20 Report Data
All jurisdictions are able to clearly report on their roles and responsibilities	Annual progress reports are clear on the roles, responsibilities and progress of each jurisdiction	See Section 4 of this report
All jurisdictions act on their respective roles and responsibilities in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from drought	<p>All jurisdictions report against 9, 10, 11 as appropriate</p> <p>Regular meetings at different levels across government to maintain momentum on drought preparedness, response, recovery and reform</p>	<p>See Section 4 of this report</p> <p>Number of AMM meetings with drought on the agenda<sup>27</sup>: 4</p> <p>Number of AGSOC meetings with drought on the agenda<sup>28</sup>: 3</p> <p>Number of AMM Drought Working Group meetings<sup>29</sup>: 2</p>
All drought actions are consistent with the NDA sections 9, 10, 11, with new programs consistent with attachments A and B of NDA	<p>All jurisdictions report against 9, 10, 11 as appropriate</p> <p>All new drought measures are consistent with attachments A &amp; B of NDA.</p>	<p>See Section 4 of this report</p> <p>See Outcomes 6 &amp; 7</p>
Australian Government and state/territory measures are complementary, avoid overlap and duplication, and minimise gaps in support	<p>All jurisdictions report against 9, 10, 11 as appropriate</p> <p>Jurisdictions note any complementarity (or lack of), overlap, duplication, and any gaps in support as they operate in each state or territory</p>	<p>See Section 4 of this report</p> <p>See Appendices</p>

27 Previously referred to as AGMIN meetings. Meetings held December 2018-June 2020, Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment.

28 Meetings held December 2018-June 2020, Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment.

29 Established since February 2020, National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency.

## OUTCOME 5:

### Improved sharing, and quality, of common sources of data and information across jurisdictions to strengthen policy and business decision making.



Collating, aggregating and sharing data is central to enabling and driving robust policy development, evidence-based decision making and adaptive program management for continuous improvement. It is also needed so there is full transparency about the use and effectiveness of public monies and Australians can hold their governments accountable.

Indicator	Measure	Data source and provider
Jurisdictions are aware of each other's drought measures and how they relate to each other.	Regular meetings at different levels across government to share information on drought preparedness, response, recovery and reform measures.	Number of AMM meetings with drought on the agenda <sup>30</sup> : 4 Number of AGSOC meetings with drought on the agenda <sup>31</sup> : 3 Number of AMM Drought Working Group meetings <sup>32</sup> : 2
	NDA annual progress report	See Section 4 of this report
	Information on drought policy and programs is easy to find and regularly updated	All jurisdictions have central online platforms that have regularly updated drought policy and program information <sup>33</sup> .
Jurisdictions have access to common information and data on climate, drought incidence and drought support measures	Improvements to common information and data sources	Number of datasets added to National Drought Map <sup>34</sup> : 2 Number of climate guides published by the Bureau of Meteorology <sup>35</sup> : 57 Number of monthly Bureau of Meteorology drought statements released <sup>36</sup> : 19

30 Previously referred to as AGMIN meetings. Meetings held December 2018-June 2020, Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment.

31 Meetings held December 2018-June 2020, Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment

32 Established since February 2020, National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency

33 Jurisdictional self assessments, April 2020

34 2019-20 data, National Drought & North Queensland Flood Response & Recovery Agency

35 Published in October 2019, National Drought & North Queensland Flood Response & Recovery Agency

36 December 2018-June 2020, Bureau of Meteorology

## THINGS TO IMPROVE

During the reporting period, and acknowledging the significant disruptions to business caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus of the AMM Working Group on Drought has been dominated by developing and agreeing the reporting framework for the NDA. A more substantive forward agenda for the working group, focused on program and policy, would better serve the intent of this outcome and the NDA more broadly.



## CASE STUDY

### **Regional Weather and Climate Data (Australian Government)**

The Bureau of Meteorology, in collaboration with FarmLink and the CSIRO, has supported the Government's drought assistance package by creating Regional Weather and Climate Guides (the guides).

The guides make it easier for local residents and businesses to understand weather and climate trends in their areas. They include information that helps farmers to understand risks and opportunities in their region for medium and long-term planning and improve decision-making as they manage and adapt to weather and climate variability.

The guides were co-designed with communities, following public consultation across the country. Fifty-six guides covering all of Australia's Natural Resource Management regions were released in October 2019 and can be accessed on the National Drought Map, the National Farmers' Federation FarmHub, the Bureau's website, and the Managing Climate Variability 'Climate Kelpie' website.

In the 2019-20 Budget, the Australian Government also committed \$77.2 million to enable the Bureau of Meteorology to install 4 new radars in the Queensland regions of Darling Downs (near Oakey), Upper Burdekin (near Greenvale), Taroom and Flinders Catchment (near Richmond). It is expected the first radars will be operational from late 2021. They will fill significant coverage gaps and provide agriculture and related industries with improved access to real-time weather information. This will enable more effective tactical responses to forecast rainfall as well as more accurate estimation of accumulated rainfall and stored soil moisture. The radars will particularly enhance the Bureau's ability to provide advance warning of severe weather, which will help farming businesses make more timely decisions in relation to movement of stock, chemical and fertiliser application, sowing and harvesting.





## OUTCOME 6:

Future programs related to the objectives (clause 6 of NDA) of this agreement are consistent with the principles for reform at Attachment A of the NDA



The principles for reform are listed at Attachment A of the NDA and are intended to guide the design of drought policy and programs. The principles prioritise helping stakeholders prepare for drought, to enhance their long-term sustainability and resilience, and to encourage good decision making and robust risk management. The principles explicitly commit to moving away from Exceptional Circumstances arrangements and 'lines-on-maps', which are considered to disincentivise preparedness and risk-management.

Indicator	Measure	2019-20 Report Data
New programs (commenced since last reporting date) are consistent with Attachment A.	New programs (commenced since last reporting date) meet an assessment undertaken against Attachment A.	62% of programs meeting all principles at Attachment A of the NDA <sup>37</sup> .

## CASE STUDY

### GrazingFutures (Queensland)

Over the years governments have made a considerable investment in identifying the necessary requirements for grazing viability in Queensland. GrazingFutures is intended to deliver this research and investment in an accessible way to primary producers. GrazingFutures supports the resilience of grazing businesses by assisting graziers to recover from the current drought and improve their capacity to be better equipped to prepare for and manage future droughts and prevailing business conditions. Grazing businesses will be better informed to manage drought impacts as an every-day part of their business and additionally, cope with other adverse business conditions and be better positioned to take advantage of business opportunities when they arise. The western Queensland grazing industry contributes significantly to regional economies, and thus, when the grazing industry is profitable, then regional communities generally perform well. In short, resilient grazing businesses contribute to resilient regional communities.

Funding for the GrazingFutures Project has been allocated from the five-year Drought and Climate Adaption Program (DCAP) which is a component of the Queensland Government's Rural Assistance and Drought Package. The GrazingFutures project is improving the capacity of grazing businesses by:

- Improving business drought preparedness through opportunities for training and the use of decision-support tools;
- Driving improvements to business risk management strategies; and
- Supporting adaptation to current and future climate impacts.

<sup>37</sup> Jurisdictional self assessments, April 2020

A significant strength of this project is that it is producer-centred and operates within a highly collaborative and coordinated, multi-agency approach. Through best practice extension, grazing businesses are supported to identify where they need to improve, supported to grow their knowledge and skills and assisted to implement business improvements. GrazingFutures develop graziers' skills through the best available science and provides opportunities for graziers to share their industry knowledge and experience with their peers and service providers.

GrazingFutures provides project leadership across all areas of Western Queensland to better integrate grazing extension services. The project is built on collaboration and enhanced alignment across organisations, including Government Departments, Regional Natural Resource Management groups, Financial Counselling Services, Regional Health Services, consultants and producer groups. GrazingFutures provides a coherent plan to more effectively share resources and better target the support provided to the grazing industry.

A recent Benefit-Cost analysis (2020) indicated that the GrazingFutures project is delivering a benefit-cost ratio of \$4.61 for every \$1.00 of Queensland Government and partner funding investment.





## OUTCOME 7:

Future programs providing temporary in-drought support are consistent with the principles and processes at Attachment B.

The agreed principles and processes for in-drought support are listed at Attachment B of the NDA. They are intended to provide a level of consistency across jurisdictions, improved rigour to in-drought programming decisions, and greater clarity on what to expect for those that need to access support.

Indicator	Measure	2019-20 Report Data
New programs (commenced since last reporting date) are consistent with Attachment B.	New programs (commenced since last reporting date) meet an assessment undertaken against Attachment B.	68% of programs meeting all principles at Attachment B of the NDA <sup>38</sup>

38 Jurisdictional self-assessments, April 2020



## CASE STUDY

### **On-farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme (Australian Government)**

The \$50 million On-farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme (the scheme) commenced in December 2018 and was initiated by the Australian Government (AG) to reduce the impact of drought and improve resilience in the farming community. Rebates are available to drought affected primary producers and horticulturalists to cover 25 per cent of costs associated with new purchases and installation of on-farm water infrastructure to water permanent plantings and livestock. Rebates are capped at \$25,000.



Eligible on-farm works include:

- Purchase and installation of pipes, pumps and water storage tanks and troughs for stock watering
- Drilling new bores for stock water and for water for permanent plantings (horticulture), and power supply and;
- Desilting stock and horticulture supply dams.

All state and territory governments participated in the scheme. They are responsible for administering the scheme and assessing and disbursing rebates to successful applicants. The Commonwealth provides financial contributions to jurisdictions to support the implementation of the scheme, and monitors and assesses the performance of the delivery. During the reporting period, South Australia and Queensland also co-invested in the scheme to increase the value of the rebate from 25 per cent to 50 per cent.

Strong partnerships have been developed between governments through implementation of the scheme, resulting in drought-affected farmers being able to install on-farm infrastructure which meets their emergency drought needs as well as increasing their drought resilience.

The scheme has surpassed everyone's expectations, leading to a stronger than anticipated demand for funding in 2019-20. In 2019-20, the government supported over 5,600 farmers to be more water efficient and provide more effective animal welfare during drought through the payment of \$29.8 million in rebates. The program is being extended through to 30 June 2022, with significant co-contributions already committed from participating jurisdictions.

Feedback to date is that the scheme has provided the type of assistance required by drought affected farmers to keep livestock watered and permanent plantings alive during drought. It has also assisted them to be more drought resilient, increase flexibility in their land management, increase productivity, protect high value assets and mitigate degradation of natural watering points.



## CASE STUDY

### Irrigation Schemes (Tasmania)

Tasmania comprises less than one per cent of Australia's land mass but generates around 13 per cent of the nation's rainfall runoff. However, rainfall and runoff is not reliably distributed when and where it is needed, constraining agriculture and making it vulnerable to drought.

Irrigation development is central to the Tasmanian Government's plan to grow the value of Tasmanian agriculture to \$10 billion by 2050, and build long-term drought preparedness and resilience in a changing climate. With secure access to water, the ability to irrigate crops and pastures provides a buffer against seasonal variability. It gives farmers more options for managing through dry conditions, the confidence to expand production, and the opportunity to diversify. With irrigation, dry conditions can benefit crops by reducing disease and enhancing quality and yield.

The Tasmanian Government has continued to undertake a state-wide program of irrigation development financed using a public-private funding model that combines Tasmanian and Australian Government funding with private capital from the sale of water entitlements.

Tasmanian Irrigation (TI), a State-owned Company, progresses irrigation schemes from concept development through to construction and operations. The schemes are designed to last 100 years and deliver water at an average reliability of greater than 95 per cent. Operating costs, including provision for asset renewal, are met by annual charges levied on water entitlement holders.

In 11 years (2010-2020) TI has constructed 15 new irrigation schemes capable of delivering 100,000 ML of water at a total capital cost of \$418 million, and advanced planning on a Pipeline to Prosperity program of up to 10 new projects. By 2025, TI expects to manage a \$680 million infrastructure portfolio capable of delivering 168,998 ML of water via 1,451 km of pipeline, 55 pump stations, 24 dams and 3 power stations.

Despite parts of the State being in drought, in 2018-19 the gross value of Tasmania's agricultural production grew by 7 per cent to \$1.9 billion. In what was a warm, dry year, irrigation was crucial to the strong performance of pasture-based industries, which account for around two-thirds of agricultural production by value.



## 4. Delivering on Roles and Responsibilities

This section of the Report considers how the roles and responsibilities of the NDA have been met. This is a collective analysis, using a graphic barometer to indicate the overall national progress against each area of responsibility. This rating was agreed by all parties, taking into consideration both quantitative and qualitative data, and the ratings are based on self-assessments provided by each jurisdiction.

Full detail of each jurisdiction's activities, against their respective roles and responsibilities, are at the Appendices.

### THINGS TO IMPROVE

The self-assessment process has generally resulted in very positive progress ratings across the board, and the objectivity of this review may be scrutinised. However, it is also possible that the positive ratings resulted from the significant commitment made by government in response to the worst of the drought.

There is potential benefit in considering alternative means of assessment and reporting, such as independent external evaluations, as part of the review of the NDA in 2022-23. Reports like this one provide valuable opportunity to reflect on current efforts, but could be complemented by rigorous evaluation to help us understand how to do better. Evaluations help us to establish an evidence-base from which to make better decisions, and shape sustainable, high impact, long-term investments.



### Guide to the ratings



	<b>On track</b>	You have fully met, and continue to meet, the role/responsibility
	<b>Good progress</b>	You have met the role/responsibility, but a small amount of additional work/changes is required
	<b>Some progress</b>	You have taken steps to meet the role/responsibility, but more steps are required
	<b>Substantial work ahead</b>	You have only just begun to address this role/responsibility, and substantial further work is required
	<b>Plans but no progress</b>	You have not yet addressed the role/responsibility, and only have basic plans in place to progress the work
	<b>No progress or plans</b>	You have not met the role/responsibility at all and have no immediate plans for work in this area

## Role of the Australian Government

On 5 December 2019, the Prime Minister announced the National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency (the Agency) to provide national leadership and to drive coordinated and timely implementation of the government's drought response. The Agency works hand-in-hand with all levels of government, farmers, non-profits, communities and agricultural organisations to forge new ways of working at a federal level and achieve strong local and national outcomes.

2019 also saw the release of the Australian Government's *Drought Response, Resilience and Preparedness Plan*. This Plan provides the framework for the Australian Government to deliver its responsibilities under the NDA, and to help farmers and communities to prepare for and manage through drought.

The Australian Government response to drought is focused on three pillars:

- Immediate action for those in drought—focused on measures to support farmers and communities facing prolonged drought conditions to keep them going until the drought breaks.
- Support for the wider communities affected by drought— many rural and regional communities depend on our farmers and are at the heart of Australia.
- Long-term resilience and preparedness—building resilience and an ability to withstand drought periods in the long term.

Across 2018-20, the Australian Government committed almost \$9 billion to support 25 drought response, recovery and preparedness measures.

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### 9a Funding and delivering a time limited household support payment based on individual and farming family needs including:

- i) **reciprocal obligations that encourage resilience; and**
- ii) **case management to support reciprocal obligation requirements.**



The Australian Government delivers the Farm Household Allowance (FHA), which is available to eligible farmers and their partners experiencing financial hardship.

Support is available for up to four years (1,460 days) in every 10 year period. The time limit means the payment may finish before the reason for the hardship changes, which is why the case support element of the package is so important.

FHA is a package of targeted assistance that gives farming families practical support to assess their situation and plan a way forward to long-term financial security.

There are five key support elements to the program:

1. A fortnightly income support payment
2. Ancillary allowances such as rent assistance, telephone and pharmaceutical allowances, and a Health Care Card
3. Case support from a Farm Household Case Officer (FHCO)
4. A financial assessment of the farm enterprise up to \$1,500
5. A \$10,000 activity supplement giving an opportunity to develop skills, access training and pay for advice to increase the capacity for financial self-reliance.

In 2019-20, the government implemented changes to simplify the FHA application process and made a number of key policy settings improvements to better deliver the program objectives.

In 2019-20 over \$134 million<sup>39</sup> was provided to over 10,900 farmers and their partners<sup>40</sup> through the FHA program. In the same period there were around 1,500 people that used the activity supplement<sup>41</sup> and it is estimated that there were around 6,300 farm families receiving an FHA payment.

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### **9b Establishing and operating a Future Drought Fund, to enhance drought preparedness and resilience.**



The Australian Government has implemented the \$5 billion Future Drought Fund, which will see \$100 million invested each year from 2020-21 in drought resilience. Keystone activities included the carriage of legislation establishing the FDF on 1 September 2019 and tabling of the Drought Resilience Funding Plan – informed by an extensive public consultation process – on 12 February 2020, as well as the establishment of the independent FDF consultative committee.

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### **9c Providing continued access to incentives that support farming businesses' risk management, including taxation concessions, the Farm Management Deposits Scheme and concessional loans.**



The Australian Government has a number of incentives supporting farming businesses' risk management, including Regional Investment Corporation (RIC) concessional loans, the Farm Management Deposits Scheme (FMD) and accelerated depreciation arrangements.

- RIC loans support farming businesses' risk management. The government has provided a \$2 billion commitment (as at 30 June 2020) for providing concessional loans, spread across four different financial products; Drought Loans, AgBiz Drought Loans, Farm Investment Loans and AgRebuild Loans (closed 30 June 2020). Introduced in January 2020, a two years interest free period applied to applications made by 30 September 2002 for the AgBiz Drought Loan and farm business Drought Loan.
- The FMD Scheme assists farmers to deal more effectively with fluctuations in cash flows. It is designed to increase the self-reliance of Australian primary producers by helping them manage their financial risk and meet their business costs in low-income years by building up cash reserves in good years. Income deposited into an FMD account is tax deductible in the financial year the deposit is made and becomes taxable income in the financial year in which it is withdrawn. This may help farmers defer or reduce their tax liability, as they are typically withdrawn in lower income years.
- Farmers must hold their FMDs for 12 months to realise the tax benefits. However, they can access them early without losing their claimed tax concessions if they are affected by drought or applicable natural disasters. Farmers may also elect to spread profit earned from the forced disposal or death of livestock over a period of five years if affected by drought or defer profits to be used to reduce the cost of replacement livestock in the disposal year or any of the next five income years. Unused profits are included in assessable income in the fifth income year.
- Accelerated depreciation arrangements are available to allow farmers to immediately deduct the purchase cost of new water facilities, fodder infrastructure and fencing. This facilitates investment in

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39 Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment Annual report 2019-2020.

40 Services Australia SAP HANA 31 March 2021. FHA recipients were paid at least one day during 2019-2020 financial year.

41 Services Australia SAP HANA 30 June 2020 and 4 July 2019.



assets which can assist primary producers through times of drought and improves primary producer cash flow by allowing (from 19 August 2018) capital expenditure on fencing assets, fodder storage assets such as silos and hay sheds used to store grain and other animal feed, and (from 12 May 2015) water facilities such as dams, tanks and pumps, to be immediately deducted. Primary producers can also deduct capital expenditure incurred in establishing horticultural plants using an accelerated depreciation regime, with deductions available from the first commercial season (depreciation period depends on the effective life of the horticultural plant).

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**9d Improving and maintaining national, regional and local predictive and real-time drought indicator information, drawing on the Bureau of Meteorology's observation network and forecasting.**



\$4.2 million has been committed by the Australian Government over four years from 2019-20 to improve and maintain the National Drought Map (the Map). The Map is an online tool that brings together a range of data, such as hydrological, climatic, rainfall, soil and vegetation to support farmers and regional Australians to assist with decision-making and who to contact for support. It is able to provide the framework and infrastructure for collaboration and data-sharing across all levels of government and jurisdictions, and has capability to integrate additional data as needed.

In the 2019-20 Budget, the Australian Government committed \$77.2 million to enable the Bureau of Meteorology to install four new radars in the Queensland regions of Darling Downs (near Oakey), Upper Burdekin (near Greenvale), Taroom and Flinders Catchment (near Richmond). These radars will fill gaps in radar coverage and provide agriculture and related industries with improved access to real-time weather information. This will assist in drought preparation and will enable more effective tactical responses to forecast rainfall as well as more accurate estimation of accumulated rainfall and stored soil moisture, in support of improved flood forecasts. It is expected the radars will be operational between late 2021 and June 2023. Data from the radars will also support the Government in improving the National Drought Map and assisting in the development of drought indicators.

The Bureau of Meteorology, in collaboration with FarmLink and CSIRO, has created Regional Weather and Climate Guides that make it easier for locals to understand weather and climate trends in their areas. There are 57 guides covering all of Australia's Natural Resource Management regions. The guides provide farmers with information that helps to improve decision-making as they manage and adapt to weather and climate variability. The Climate Guides have been prominently positioned on the FarmHub website, making it easier for locals to understand weather and climate trends in their area.

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## Role of the states and territories

*Further detail of activities against these roles and responsibilities are at Appendix A.*

All jurisdictions have delivered activities related to their roles and responsibilities during the reporting period. Different jurisdictions have had varying focuses in different areas, to best meet the conditions and needs of their constituents.

Capacity building programs have covered a broad range of skills and knowledge including business skills, budgeting and financial literacy, on-farm activities related to land, water and stock management, youth leadership and health and wellbeing. Priorities for animal welfare and land management have been shaped by climatic conditions with issues such as destocking, stock transport, soil erosion and pest and weed management coming to the fore. Some jurisdictions have increased their regional service offering to more closely monitor conditions and provide in-person advice and support as required.

Proportionally, state and territory jurisdictions report a significant level of focus and investment in preparedness and resilience activities. These include both drought specific activities, such as on-farm improvements, and initiatives that build resilience and preparedness for difficult times more generally, such as financial planning or personal wellbeing. These future-focused investments are entirely consistent with the strategic intent agreed through the NDA and are expected to be strengthened through Future Drought Fund partnerships in coming years.

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**10a Encouraging the delivery and uptake of capability-building programs to improve farming businesses' skills and decision-making that are flexible and tailored to farming businesses' needs.**



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**10b Ensuring animal welfare and land management issues are managed during drought.**



Jurisdiction	Measures Reported	
NSW	Rural Resilience Program	10a
	Young Farmer Business Skills Program	10a
	Direct services provided by NSW Government	10a
	Partnership arrangements with NSW RSPCA, Animal Welfare League NSW and NSW Police to enforce the <i>Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979</i>	10b
	Local Land Services	10a, 10b
VIC	Smarter Safer Farms Initiative	10a
	Young Famers Program	10a
	Drought Support Package	10a, 10b
	Land Health Program	10b
	On-farm Drought Infrastructure Grants	10b
	Direct services provided by Agriculture Victoria	10a, 10b
QLD	Drought and Climate Adaptation Program	10a
	Drought Relief Assistance Scheme	10b
	Queensland Feral Pest Initiative	10b
	Direct services provided by QLD Government	10a, 10b
WA	Plan Prepare Prosper Program	10a
	Seeding Success Program	10a
	Soil and land conservation council	10b
	Wind erosion strategy	10b
	Ground cover monitoring	10b
	Grants for management of feral herbivores	10b
	Direct services provided by Department of Primary Industries and Rural Development	10a, 10b
SA	Farm Business Management Program	10a
	Family and Business Support Program	10a
	Soil Erosion Emergency Action Fund	10b
	Fit to Load Campaign	10b
	Wild dog trapping and baiting program	10b
	Direct services provided through partnership arrangements with Landscape Boards, Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, and PIRSA	10a, 10b

Jurisdiction	Measures Reported	
TAS	Cultivating Rural Excellence Program	10a
	Farm Business Mentoring Program	10a
	Direct services delivered through the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture	10a
	Drought and Weed Management Program	10b
ACT	Direct services provided by ACT Natural Resource Management, ACT Biosecurity and Rural Services and the ACT Regional Agricultural Landcare Facilitator	10a, 10b
NT	Paddock Power Calculator	10a
	Grazing Land Management Courses	10b
	Direct services provided through the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade, and animal welfare services by government staff	10a, 10b

## Shared roles and responsibilities

*Further detail of activities against these roles and responsibilities are at Appendix B.*

Given the climatic conditions during the reporting period, there has been a significant amount of investment and activity against all shared roles and responsibilities. Efforts across Australian Government and state and territory governments were mostly aligned in shared programs, such as the Rural Financial Counselling Service or the On-farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme. Early planning for implementation of the Future Drought Fund indicate that this approach of shared programming is likely to expand in coming years, which will contribute significantly to coordination efforts.

Each state and territory government reported strongly on collaborating with both government and non-government bodies. These partnerships were highly valued for effective program implementation and a conduit for collective effort and shared knowledge.

Ensuring strong, coordinated bilateral coordination between the Australian Government and each state and territory government on a regular, ongoing basis is important to the success of the broader NDA. This is happening reliably in some cases, but there is room for improvement in others.

There are no apparent gaps in effort or investment per se, but a proliferation of activity is evident, as governments work quickly towards meeting the real and immediate needs of those affected by drought. The nature of such reactive programming raises the risk of duplication, inefficiencies and confusion. It is noted that a number of reviews and evaluations of drought response packages are either underway or planned. This issue should be revisited in the next report, in light of the findings of these reviews.



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**11a Developing, designing, implementing and funding drought preparedness, response and recovery programs that are consistent with the NDA, encourage robust risk management and seek to avoid market distortions.**

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**11b Developing capability-building programs, tools and technologies to inform and improve farming businesses' decision-making and promote resilience.**

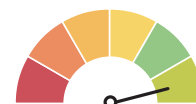
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**11c Provision of rural financial counselling services.**

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**11d Support to mitigate the effects of drought on the health and wellbeing of farming families and farming communities.**

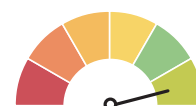
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**11e Sharing, coordinating, collaborating and communicating information on drought preparedness, response and recovery policies and programs being developed and implemented.**

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**11f Ensuring information on assistance for drought preparedness, response and recovery is accessible and readily available.**

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**11g Ensuring consistency of drought policy and reform objectives and complementarity of drought preparedness, response and recovery programs.**

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**11h Contributing to the development of quality, publicly available data, including but not limited to:**

- i) weather, seasonal and climate forecasts;
  - ii) regional and local predictive real-time drought indicator information;
  - iii) a consistent early warning system for drought; and
  - iv) an improved understanding of fodder crops and holdings across Australia.
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Jurisdiction	Measures Reported	
CTH	Report - Analysis of government support for Australian agricultural producers	11a, 11e
	On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme	11a
	National Water Grid Authority and the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund	11a
	<i>Improving Great Artesian Basin Drought Resilience Program</i>	11a
	Water for Fodder Program	11a
	Drought Communities Small Business Support Program	11a, 11d
	National Drought Map	11b, 11h, 11e, 11f
	Bureau of Meteorology Weather Radars	11b, 11h
	Regional Weather and Climate Guides	11b, 11h
	Drought Communities Programme Extension	11d
	DCPE – Roads to Recovery program	11d
	Empowering our Communities Initiative	11 d
	Trusted Advocates Network Trial	11d
	Better Access Telehealth	11d
	Connecting Youth Awareness Raising Initiative (ReachOut)	11d
	Tackling Tough Times Together (Foundation for Regional and Rural Renewal)	11a, 11d
	Drought Community Support Initiative	11d
	Country Women's Association Grant	11d
	Drought Community Outreach Program (Rotary Grant)	11d
	Education Special Circumstances Program	11d
	Community Child Care Fund	11d
	Building Better Regions Fund	11d
	Agriculture Ministers Meeting (AMM) Working Group on Drought	11e
	Australian Government Standing Group on Drought	11e
	Australian Government Disaster and Climate Resilience Reference Group	11e
	Drought Finance Taskforce	11e
	Minister's Roundtable on Drought	11e
	FDF Consultative Committee	11e
	Drought Communications Network	11e
	Drought Communications and Engagement Cross-Government Group	11e
	Drought Community Outreach Program	11e
	Regional Recovery Officer Network	11e, 11d, 11g
	Recovery Connect	11f, 11d, 11e

Jurisdiction	Measures Reported	
	FarmHub	11f, 11d, 11e
	Establishment of the National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency to drive whole of government coordination during peak drought period	11a, 11d, 11e, 11f, 11h, 11g
	Future Drought Fund	11a, 11b, 11d, 11e
	Farm Household Allowance	11a, 11b, 11d
	Rural Financial Counselling Service	11a, 11b, 11c, 11d, 11f
<b>NSW</b>	Safe and Secure Water Program	11a
	Farm Innovation Fund	11a
	Drought Assistance Fund Loans	11a
	Seafood Innovation Fund	11a
	Waivers of fees and charges	11a
	Local Land Services	11b, 11e
	Rural Financial Counselling Service	11c
	Rural Resilience Program	11d
	Emergency Drought Relief Mental Health Package	11d
	Rural Adversity Mental Health Program	11d
	Farmgate counsellors and drought peer support workers	11d
	Mental Health Sports Fund	11d
	Drought Support Program Teams	11d
	Financial support and maintenance of staffing for schools and childcare services	11d
	Mobile desalination plants in Brewarrina, Bourke and Walgett	11d
	NSW Drought Hub website	11f
	Enhanced Drought Information System	11f, 11h
	Consistency and alignment achieved through Water Strategy and outcomes budgeting framework	11g
	Drought and Supplementary Feed Calculator	11h
	Farm Tracker	11h
	Drought stages information for water license holders	11h
<b>VIC</b>	On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Support Grants	11a
	On-Farm Drought Resilience Grant	11a
	Farm Business Assistance	11a
	Financial Household Relief	11a

Jurisdiction	Measures Reported	
	Local Government Service Support Payment	11a
	Farm Business Management and Planning Support Services,	11a
	Farm Machinery Improvement Grants	11a
	Camps Sports and Excursion Fund	11a
	Back to School Support	11a
	Kindergarten fee subsidy	11a
	Small Business Financial Counselling Service	11a
	Technical and Decision Making Support for Farmers	11b
	Catchment Management Authority Drought Employment Program	11b
	Farm Employment Exchange Pilot	11b
	Rural Financial Counselling Service	11c
	Look Over the Farm Gate Program	11d
	National Centre for Farmer Health Services	11d
	Community Priorities Fund	11d
	Drought Interdepartmental Coordination Group	11e
	Regional Drought and Dry Seasonal Coordinators	11e, 11f
	Rural Assistance Commissioner	11e
	Managing for and during drought website	11f
	Dedicated customer Service Centre, drought support email and online enquiry form	11f
	Targeted communications products	11f
	The Break seasonal update	11h
QLD	Drought and Climate Adaptation Program	11a, 11b, 11e
	Drought Program Review	11a
	Farm Debt Restructure Office	11a
	Co-investment of On-farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme	11a
	Rural Financial Counselling Service	11c
	Community Drought Support Program	11d
	Royal Flying Doctors Drought Wellbeing Service	11d
	Tackling Regional Adversity through Integrated Care program	11d
	The Long Paddock website	11e, 11f
	FutureBeef website	11e
	Drought Program Review to identify best policy and programs for future drought	11g
	Queensland Drought Mitigation Centre	11h



Jurisdiction	Measures Reported	
WA	Ground cover monitoring	11a
	Data Analysis to quantify water demand for livestock and cropping	11a
	Water Audit Rebates	11a
	Water carting	11a
	Internet of Things Decision Agriculture Grants Initiative	11b
	eConnected Grainbelt project	11b
	Weather Station Map	11b
	Rural Financial Counselling Service	11c
	Regional Men's Health Initiative	11d
	Interdepartmental response monitoring	11e
	Interdepartmental working group on rural water supply.	11e
	Dry Season and weather/climate outlook webpage	11f
	Managing dry conditions support services directory	11f
	Western Australian Rural Heath	11f
	Financial and Information support directory	11f
	Consistency and alignment achieved through compliance with WA's State out-comes, and the outcomes budgeting framework	11g
	Grains, horticulture, livestock and aquaculture research programs	11h
	Seasonal climate information services	11h
	Pastures from Space service	11h
SA	Farm Business Management program	11a, 11b
	ifarmwell digital toolkit	11a, 11b, 11d
	Drought Strategic Business Review program	11a, 11b
	Family and Business Support program	11a, 11b, 11d
	Co-investment of On-farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme	11a
	Pastoral Lease Rent Rebate Scheme	11a
	Multi-Peril Crop Insurance Stamp Duty Waiver	11a
	Rural Financial Counselling Service	11c
	Drought Health and Wellbeing Sub-Committee	11d
	Community Drought Recovery Events	11d
	Dry Conditions Working Group	11e, 11g
	24-hour Drought Hotline	11f
	The Drought Hub website	11f
	South Australia drought map	11h
	Bi-monthly Crop and Pasture Report	11h
	PIRSA Adverse Events Recovery Framework, staged approach to managing drought	11h

Jurisdiction	Measures Reported	
TAS	Pipeline to Prosperity Program	11a
	Rural Relief Fund	11a, 11d
	Improvements to the Tasmanian Fodder Register	11a, 11f
	Rural Alive and Well	11a, 11d
	Tasmanian Weeds Action Fund	11a
	Enterprise Suitability Maps	11b
	Rural Financial Counselling Service	11c
	Intergovernmental processes to promote coordination and share information on drought policies and programs	11e, 11g
	Forum of Rural Stakeholders	11e, 11g
	FarmPoint Hotline	11f
	Agrigrowth liaison officers	11f
ACT	Rural Assistance Grants	11a
	Soil Moisture Probe	11b, 11h
	Services available through the NSW Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health Rural Adversity Mental Health Program	11d
	ACT Rural Farmers Association information sessions	11e
	ACT RALF Newsletters	11e
	ACT Farmers Support package web page	11f
NT	Hardship relief waivers for pastoral rent	11a
	Quarterly Pastoral Feed Outlook	11b, 11h
	Livestock carrying capacity assessments	11b
	Grazing land management courses	11b
	Testing and demonstrating land management practices on Old Man Plains Re-search Station	11b
	Rural Financial Counselling Service	11c
	Public and non-government health and psycho-social services	11d
	Northern Australian Climate Program	11e
	Livestock Industry Development Services	11e
	Pastoral Industry Advisory Committees	11e
	FutureBeef Website	11e
	Program Specific websites available for RFCS, On-farm Emergency Water Infra-structure Rebate Scheme, NT Pastoral Feed Outlook	11f
	Maintains core policy and corporate capabilities to engage with Commonwealth on joint policy and program priorities	11g

## 5. Reviews and Evaluations

In addition to reporting against individual roles and responsibilities, many jurisdictions are in the process of, or have completed, reviews on individual programs under the NDA with a view to continually assess, evaluate and improve existing measures. The release of many of these reviews and evaluations in the next reporting period will be valuable in helping to better understand programming strengths and opportunities.

Name of measure	Responsible jurisdiction	Review date	Link to review and any Government Response
Rural Financial Counselling Service	Australian Government	2019	<a href="http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/assistance/rural-financial-counselling-service/publications">http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/assistance/rural-financial-counselling-service/publications</a>
Farm Household Allowance	Australian Government	September 2018 to February 2019	Review Report <a href="https://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/assistance/farm-household-allowance/review">https://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/assistance/farm-household-allowance/review</a>  Australian Government Response <a href="https://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/assistance/farm-household-allowance">https://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/assistance/farm-household-allowance</a>
Drought Communities Programme Extension	Australian Government	January 2020	<a href="https://www.regional.gov.au/regional/programs/files/DCPE_Review.MainReport_FINAL.pdf">https://www.regional.gov.au/regional/programs/files/DCPE_Review.MainReport_FINAL.pdf</a>
Water for Fodder	Australian Government	April 2020	<a href="https://www.agriculture.gov.au/water/mdb/programs/basin-wide/water-for-fodder/review">https://www.agriculture.gov.au/water/mdb/programs/basin-wide/water-for-fodder/review</a>
NSW Strategic Drought Evaluation	NSW	2018-21	Report due late 2021
NSW Drought Relief Measures	NSW	2018-20	Report pending due July 2021
Enhanced Drought Information System	NSW		Report pending due late 2021
Farm Gate Counsellor/ Drought Peer Support Program	NSW		Report pending
Rural Adversity Mental Health Program	NSW		Report pending

Name of measure	Responsible jurisdiction	Review date	Link to review and any Government Response
National Association of Loss and Grief Our Shout Program	NSW		Report pending
DPIE-Water Drought Emergency Fund	NSW		Report pending
Queensland Drought Program review	QLD	January 2019	<a href="https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/agriculture/disaster-recovery/drought/program-review">https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/agriculture/disaster-recovery/drought/program-review</a>
Drought Response Support Package	VIC	2018-20	Report due late 2021
Water for Food Program	WA		<a href="https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/water-food">https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/water-food</a>
Evaluation of the Western Australian Drought Pilot Programs	WA	June 2019	<a href="https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/evaluation-report-wa-drought-pilot.pdf">https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/evaluation-report-wa-drought-pilot.pdf</a>





## 6. Next Steps

### Future priorities for implementation

This first annual reporting process has identified five key areas where collaborative effort should be prioritised.

1. It has highlighted gaps and limitations in the data available to report against the proposed measures in the reporting framework. Learnings from this initial report should be used to review how information is collected and reported against the NDA for future reporting periods.
2. It is noted that the self-assessment process has resulted in extremely positive progress ratings across the board, and the objectivity of this review may be scrutinised. However, it is also possible that the positive ratings resulted from the significant commitment made by government in response to the worst of the drought. There is potential benefit in considering alternative means of assessment and reporting, such as independent external evaluations, as part of the review of the NDA in 2022-23.
3. Providing clarity to end users about available support in any specific place or at any point in time is complicated by the fact that each jurisdiction employs different methodologies to classify drought, and there is little guidance available for policy makers about when the impacts of drought 'start' and 'stop'. While complicated, there would be benefit in working towards greater inter-jurisdictional consistency in defining drought.
4. The urgent need experienced by stakeholders during this reporting period has resulted in a strong reaction from governments and, in some cases, the proliferation of a large number of measures to help those in-drought. There are likely ways to improve the way we work in drought to rationalise, streamline and simplify the way we work.
5. During the reporting period, and acknowledging the significant disruptions to business caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus of the AMM Working Group on Drought has been dominated by developing and agreeing the reporting framework for the NDA. A more substantive forward agenda for the working group, focused on program and policy, would better serve the intent of the NDA.

### Upcoming Activity

The next reporting period is expected to see significant progress with implementation of the Future Drought Fund, which is the Australian Government's significant long term investment in drought preparedness and resilience. Eight foundational programs were announced on 1 July 2020 focused on: improving farm business risk management capabilities; development and adoption of drought resilient farming and land management practices and technologies; making climate information more accessible and usable; developing regional drought resilience plans to inform future action; and building the community leaders, networks and organisations that drive drought resilience action and help communities through tough times. Further, there will be progress to ensure we have the right mix of tools to support farmers through the implementation of the findings from the *Review of Australian Government Drought Response and the Annual Review of the Australian Government's Drought Response, Resilience and Preparedness Plan*.

The ACT Government is commencing development of a Regional Drought Resilience Plan that identifies and guides actions, with a focus on innovation, to build the Territory's resilience to future droughts (jointly funded by the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund). This will involve extensive collaboration with key stakeholders including ACT rural landholders. The ACT Government will also commence the Farm Business Resilience program, funded by the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund, to provide further farming businesses' skills.

NSW is focusing on a Primary Industries Climate Change Research Strategy program called 'Drought under a Changing Climate' which is part of a statewide Vulnerability Assessment. The program involves completing state of the art drought risk assessment for NSW, as well as profiling drought management adaptations using farm case studies. To complement this, twelve regional water strategies are being prepared to provide long-term plans for securing water supplies across NSW under a changing climate, including the Town Water Risk Reduction Program. The Commonwealth, with NSW Government will deliver a \$650 million upgrade of Wyangala Dam in the state's Central West and a \$480 million new Dungowan Dam near Tamworth. The Commonwealth and NSW are also investing an initial \$24 million on a 50/50 basis for the 100,000-megalitre proposed Border Rivers project on the Mole River, near the Queensland border.

The Northern Territory Government is developing programs for delivery in partnership with the Future Drought Fund and the regionally based innovation hubs. Under the Farm Business Resilience Program a package of specific modules is proposed for 2021-24 that aim to assist farmers to lower the cost of undertaking training or engaging a consultant; and rangeland and animal welfare management. The NT also plans to raise a project under the Drought Resilience Planning Program focusing on water security; livestock movement infrastructure; feral herbivore management; and psycho-social outreach services.

Queensland will continue to implement the endorsed recommendations of the Drought Program Review, the full implementation of which has been delayed to 1 July 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

South Australia's priorities in 2020-21 are largely represented in the continuation of the existing priorities announced in the \$21 million Drought Support Package should they be required. South Australia is also developing programs for delivery in partnership with the Future Drought Fund. South Australia is also currently developing its State Landscape Strategy to support the newly formed *Landscape South Australia Act* which will focus on landscape resilience to assist land owners, farmers, nature, industry and communities. Future state natural resource management investment will be guided by the State Landscape Strategy which will have a themes around resilience to climate change, carbon offsetting, restoration, minimising soil erosion, efficient water use and management of farm pests. South Australia has established the Landscape Priorities fund, which will result in significant investment in landscape scale projects focusing on practical measures to build resilience in the landscape for all users and values.

The Tasmanian Government is continuing to invest in long-term drought preparedness and resilience, including \$113.7 million in a third tranche of irrigation schemes through Phase One of the Pipeline to Prosperity program delivered by Tasmanian Irrigation Pty Ltd. Phase One will comprise at least five projects, including the Don, Fingal, Tamar and Northern Midlands irrigation schemes, and the Sassafras Wesley Vale Irrigation Scheme augmentation. The ongoing investment in infrastructure will be complemented by an additional \$1.5 million to begin implementing the Government's comprehensive Rural Water Use Strategy released in April, including initiatives to address river health, dam management and safety, monitoring and metering, and modernised licensing and permitting. In parallel with the current review of Tasmania's *Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008*, the Government is developing Tasmania's next whole-of-government climate action plan.

The Victorian Government is currently developing a new 'Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy'. It will include an overview of water resources in the region, main water challenges and a long-term plan to secure the water future of the region. Sustainable water strategies (SWSs) are one of the key elements for planning Victoria's water resources well into the future and are used to manage threats to the supply and quality of water resources to protect environmental, economic, cultural and recreational values. The other key priority is the development of Adaptation Action Plans to build the state's resilience and help Victorians plan for the impacts of climate change. Under Victoria's *Climate Change Act 2017*, Adaptation Action Plans (AAPs) will be required to be developed every five years focusing on key systems that are either vulnerable to the inevitable impacts of climate change, or are essential to ensure Victoria is prepared: built environment; education and training; health and human services; natural environment; primary production; transport; and the water cycle.

Western Australia's Water Smart Farms Project aims to optimise water availability and increase the use of 'fit for purpose' water. It will focus on developing practical systems for on-farm desalination and improving the effectiveness of farm dams and catchments. The planned Southern Rangelands Restoration Project will lay foundations from which to attract future co-investment to cultivate innovation and build resilience to climate variability in the Western Australian pastoral industry through a combination of landscape regeneration and appropriate stocking levels.

Jurisdictions are also working with the Australian Government to jointly fund Future Drought Fund programs.

## Ongoing reporting

This first annual report will establish a baseline, against which progress will be monitored in future reports. Future reports will allow data collection across years, allowing for consideration of trends and comparative analysis over time.

The NDA will continue to be reported on annually. The next annual report will be for the 2020-2021 financial year and is expected to be released at the end of 2021.

## Reviewing the Agreement

The NDA states that it will be reviewed approximately two years before it expires on 30 June 2024. AMM is responsible for determining the terms of reference, timing and methodology for the review. The AMM Working Group on Drought will develop an agreed approach to the NDA review process as part of its 2021-22 work plan.

# 7. Appendices

## APPENDIX A

### State and Territory Roles

#### Activity Summary – Role of the States and Territories (ACT)

##### 10. Each state or territory is responsible for:

- a. encouraging the delivery and uptake of capability-building programs to improve farming businesses' skills and decision making that are flexible and tailored to farming businesses' needs.**

Through ACT Natural Resource Management (NRM) and the ACT Regional Agricultural Landcare Facilitator (RALF) within the ACT Government and Landcare groups ACT rural landholders are offered a range of capacity building opportunities to improve the capability of their business to prepare and operate through drought. ACT Biosecurity and Rural Services (BRS) have held information sessions with ACT NRM to assist Rural Landholders in gaining the correct information to make "on farm" decisions to help them through drought.

The ACT Government works closely with the ACT Rural Landholders Association to develop a range of training sessions, webinars, field visits and other activities to assist with the continuous learning and development of rural landholders.

Other examples include:

- 'Livestock Management During Dry Times' information session in August 2019;
- Climate session with Bureau of Meteorology and ACT rural landholders to develop a BOM ACT NRM Region Climate product June 2019. This engagement with rural landholders led to the development of the ACT Climate Guide - intended for ACT rural landholders to understand past and future climate change to inform farm business management: <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/climate-guides/guides/023-ACT-Climate-Guide.pdf>
- Approximately 15 editions of the ACT Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator newsletter which promotes information and capacity building opportunities to build farm resilience to drought: <https://actlandcare.org.au/subscribe-to-our-newsletter/>
- Regular attendance by ACT BRS and ACT NRM at the ACT Rural Landholders Association (RLA) (the peak body for ACT farmers) to present information on drought, drought preparedness and opportunities (training/capacity building, grants and rebates, trials and demonstrations) that are currently available. Also an opportunity to get feedback from rural landholders on their current circumstances and their needs.



#### Activity Summary – Role of the States and Territories (ACT)

##### 10. Each state or territory is responsible for:

###### **b. ensuring animal welfare and land management issues are managed during drought.**

BRS facilitates the Land Management Agreements for rural landholders which includes sections for “on farm” drought management strategies. BRS also have a biosecurity veterinarian who can offer animal welfare advice to livestock producers.

Regular attendance by BRS and ACT NRM at the ACT RLA meetings to present information on drought, drought preparedness and opportunities (training/capacity building, grants and rebates, trials and demonstrations) that are currently available. These meetings are also an opportunity for ACT Government to address animal welfare and land management issues.

#### Activity Summary – Role of the States and Territories (NSW)

##### 10. Each state or territory is responsible for:

###### **a. encouraging the delivery and uptake of capability-building programs to improve farming businesses’ skills and decision making that are flexible and tailored to farming businesses’ needs.**

Pre-existing programs including the Rural Resilience Program (RRP) (established in 2014) and the Young Farmer Business Program (YFBP) (established in 2017) build business and personal resilience of primary production businesses, families and individuals.

The RRP engages with more than 6,000 individuals per annum and has 400 different stakeholder groups to co-design resilience building initiatives at a local scale.

There have been 244 YFBP events with 10,127 participants and 76 per cent of participants reported an increased capacity to make good business decisions.

The Farm Business Skills Program was established in 2014 and was available until June 2020 to support farmers to prepare for and respond to drought.

## Activity Summary – Role of the States and Territories (NSW)

### 10. Each state or territory is responsible for:

#### b. ensuring animal welfare and land management issues are managed during drought.

NSW Department of Primary Industry is responsible for ensuring the policy and legislative frameworks in NSW support good animal welfare outcomes. NSW DPI administers the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*, the *Exhibited Animals Protection Act 1986* and the *Animal Research Act 1985*, as well as the associated *Codes of Practice and Standards and Guidelines*. DPI works in partnership with NSW RSPCA, Animal Welfare League NSW and NSW Police, the organisations authorised to enforce the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*.

During the reporting period, DPI has:

- Administered twenty four (24) Stock Welfare Panels to resolve complex livestock welfare cases, assisting almost 23,000 stock animals in the process.
- Conducted, in partnership with Local Land Services (LLS) District Veterinarians across the state, approximately 6000 drought-related livestock disease investigation tests at the State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory.
- Conducted, in partnership with LLS across the state, approximately 2,830 tests on stock feed and water to identify toxicity risks, to support informed decision making re: use of unfamiliar fodder options and management of compromised water options.
- Established the Northern Drought Response Pilot Program in partnership with LLS, increasing resourcing to enable personalised early intervention in farm management decisions, driving improved stock welfare outcomes, and supporting the mental and physical well-being of farmers. LLS reported significant benefits across regions and a dramatic reduction in stock welfare cases. Stock owner engagement with LLS increased and feedback was positive.
- Employed additional enforcement agency inspectors for drought related activities and Stock Welfare Panels.
- Funded each of the 11 LLS regions across the state to deliver a drought engagement program involving targeted provision of management advice, extension activities, and communications to support stock owners and prevent the development of stock welfare issues.
- LLS has provided advice, information and strategies to support farmers in animal nutrition and feeding requirements, drought-related disease and welfare issues, management options, decision making, and land management practices. This has been achieved through phone calls, workshops, farm visits, and water and feed testing including interpretation of results. LLS District Veterinarians have participated in every Stock Welfare Panel to date, contributing expert veterinary advice and assessments. In total LLS reached and directly supported over 60,000 farmers.

## Activity Summary – Role of the States and Territories (NT)

### 10. Each state or territory is responsible for:

- a. encouraging the delivery and uptake of capability-building programs to improve farming businesses' skills and decision making that are flexible and tailored to farming businesses' needs.**

The Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade delivers a number of Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA)-funded research and development projects that increase the understanding of sustainable and profitable grazing land management. For example, one project has developed a Mapping Tool and Investment Calculator (the Paddock Power Calculator) for beef producers to compare the return on investment for different property development options they might be considering. This tool will assist producers to make more informed decisions on water point development and paddock subdivision to better manage grazing pressure and seasonal risk. The Department also organises relevant training activities for industry delivered by private providers.

### 10. Each state or territory is responsible for:

- b. ensuring animal welfare and land management issues are managed during drought.**

Drought affected areas have seen major destocking with Department staff from Biosecurity and Animal Welfare Division heavily involved in regulatory inspection and supervised treatments to facilitate the movement of cattle to other properties within the Territory or interstate.

Detail of these and other activities carried out include:

- Development of a Risk Analysis Matrix for assessment of "high risk" properties.
- Inspection of high risk properties and discussions with managers on strategies with drought.
- Approximately 100,000 head were inspected in the period July-October 2020 for suitability to transport (involved 300 property visits).
- Livestock transport regulatory compliance inspections.
- Production of FAQs for NTCA on resources/assistance measures available and animal welfare obligations for industry
- Several cattle and livestock welfare inspections by the Animal Welfare Branch.
- Drought management and turn-off, approximately 1.25 million head overall, with 0.5 million head from the Barkly region in 2019-20.
- Consultation with NTCA and other livestock industries from February -December 2020 on new NT Animal Protection Regulations.

Grazing Land Management Courses were available on request from industry groups. Over 20 pastoral enterprises, government departments, and NGOs have undertaken the training to build the landscape's resilience to future drought.

A number of participants, NGOs, and industry groups have adopted and delivered Grazing Land Management Projects to better manage pasture and landscapes.

#### Activity Summary – Role of the States and Territories (QLD)

##### 10. Each state or territory is responsible for:

- a. encouraging the delivery and uptake of capability-building programs to improve farming businesses' skills and decision making that are flexible and tailored to farming businesses' needs.

The Queensland Government operates the Drought and Climate Adaptation Program. This is the principal program of research/development and extension to support drought preparedness of primary producers and the delivery of Queensland obligations under the NDA.

DCAP has had \$10.844 million allocated to it in the financial years 2018-21. If partner contributions are taken into account this amount would be more than doubled.

##### 10. Each state or territory is responsible for:

- b. ensuring animal welfare and land management issues are managed during drought.

The Drought Relief Assistance Scheme (DRAS) provides freight subsidies for the movement of fodder and water and a rebate on the purchase of emergency water infrastructure to supply water to livestock owned by graziers. DRAS has provided \$53 million in assistance since December 2018.

\$4,000,000 in grants and subsidies has been provided for the *Queensland Feral Pest Initiative* to support projects in drought-affected areas that control invasive pests and weed and maintain Barrier Fencing.

Animal welfare and drought feeding workshops have been held around Queensland, with a recent focus on small landholder livestock owners.

#### Activity Summary – Role of the States and Territories (SA)

##### 10. Each state or territory is responsible for:

- a. encouraging the delivery and uptake of capability-building programs to improve farming businesses' skills and decision making that are flexible and tailored to farming businesses' needs.

During the period the South Australian Government contributed funding to two farm business management pilots, the Farm Business Management Program delivery by Pinion Advisory, and the Farm Business Strategic Review Program that was delivered by Rural Business Support. The programs gave many farm businesses the opportunity to undertake strategic reviews and develop business plans specific to their needs and situation. The programs represent critical initial steps to building capacity and resilience to adverse events in South Australia.

The Farm Business Management Program is a \$300,000, 12 month program that is providing training that will enable farm businesses to manage and prepare for drought, climate change and variability by supporting their long-term sustainability and resilience. Participants will undertake a strategic review of their business and develop a business plan specific to their needs and situation. The business plan will address business risk management, identify opportunities for improvement and guide on-farm implementation. This will ensure a smooth transition from drought into recovery and back to business as usual, or better. The program will run from June 2020 to July 2021.

The program builds participants skills in relation to decision making, business planning, risk management, succession planning and other areas relating to financial literacy and business resilience.

The Rural Financial Counselling Service provide business support that builds farm business skills and decision making capability. The South Australian Government's current ongoing annual commitment for RFCS is \$260,000 and it also committed an additional \$500,000 to the program for the 2019-20 period as part of the \$21 million Drought Support Package.



## Activity Summary – Role of the States and Territories (SA)

Family and Business Support (FaBS) Program - the program funds Mentors to provide non-clinical counselling support and business support to farmers and where appropriate refer them to relevant government or industry support services. The FaBS mentors help address a critical support gap by connecting those affected by drought and other adverse events to available financial and mental health services, local health networks, government and non-government assistance, as well as community organisations and donations. By providing this support service, the Government has reduced a workload which was otherwise being met in the first instance by RFCS counsellors and built the capability of farmers.

The FaBS Program has been delivered by PIRSA since 2018, with the program currently funded to 30 June 2021. There are currently 14 Family and Business Support Program mentors working across South Australia, 9 supporting drought and 5 support bushfire affected communities.

Capacity building is supported through numerous means, including water efficiency programs, support for the management of soils and minimising soil erosion, pest management and land restoration. This is delivered within the partnership arrangements between Landscape Boards, PIRSA and the South Australian Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources.

### 10. Each state or territory is responsible for:

#### b. ensuring animal welfare and land management issues are managed during drought.

As part of the expended Drought Support Package announced on 5 March 2020, \$100,000 in funding has been allocated to a Soil Erosion Emergency Action Fund to address soil drift and stabilise paddocks. Part of this funding is being directed towards meeting some of the costs incurred by Councils removing soil deposited by erosion or repairing damage caused by erosion, where the erosion has occurred because of the drought. The fund is providing support to 11 Councils in severely drought affected regions to remove soil from public infrastructure such as roads. Councils have been offered approximately \$7,000 each to assist with costs of soil removal from public assets, reducing cost pressures on Councils' rate revenue.

Animal Health officers are available to provide advice and support related to:

- animal health and welfare during dry conditions
- livestock transport requirements
- biosecurity requirements such as requesting commodity declarations when buying in feed sources

PIRSA have implemented a Fit to Load industry awareness campaign with a focus on those stakeholders engaged in the movement and transport of livestock. Fit to Load signs for saleyards and abattoirs were installed.

The wild dog trapping and baiting program commenced in 1 July 2018. Under the expanded Wild Dog Trapping program funded through the Drought Support Package, the panel of five trappers increased the hours they work. The trappers have contracts with PIRSA until 30 June 2022 to undertake trapping work on an as-needs basis inside the Dog Fence. An aerial baiting program has been carried out. A wild dog bounty scheme is providing \$100,000 of support to drought affected landholders to take action to control wild dogs, and will run until 30 June 2021. Between July 2018 and June 2020, 696 wild dogs were euthanised through these programs.

South Australia has a comprehensive suite of Animal welfare legislation and policy framework that DEW and PIRSA lead and work with landholders to ensure it is upheld.

## Activity Summary – Role of the States and Territories (TAS)

### 10. Each state or territory is responsible for:

#### a. encouraging the delivery and uptake of capability-building programs to improve farming businesses' skills and decision making that are flexible and tailored to farming businesses' needs.

The Tasmanian Government provided Tasmania's Rural Financial Counselling Service provider, Rural Business Tasmania (RBT), \$150,000 over three years, (2017-18 to 2019-20) to implement a Cultivating Rural Excellence program to help farmers build their farm business management skills.

In 2018-19 the Government committed \$460,000 over four years to fund a Farm Business Mentoring program, also delivered by RBT.

In 2019-20 the Government provided \$150,000 to the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture to assist farmers with in-drought grazing, pasture, and livestock management strategies, as well as farm planning and practical tools for post-drought rebuilding of farm productivity in a changing climate.

### 10. Each state or territory is responsible for:

#### b. ensuring animal welfare and land management issues are managed during drought.

The Tasmanian Government's September 2019 drought package included targeted funding for drought weed management support from the \$5 million Tasmanian Weeds Action Fund (2018-19 to 2022-23). The \$350,000 Drought and Weed Management Program rolled out in 2020 targeted five local government areas recovering from prolonged drought on Tasmania's East Coast and in the South-East of the State. The Program sought to manage key weeds species in the coming season, and post drought. It included funding towards the cost of a weeds officer in each municipality, and on-ground weed management activities.

## Activity Summary – Role of the States and Territories (VIC)

### 10. Each state or territory is responsible for:

- a. **encouraging the delivery and uptake of capability-building programs to improve farming businesses' skills and decision making that are flexible and tailored to farming businesses' needs.**

The Agriculture Services branch within Agriculture Victoria provides technical information and resources focused on drought preparedness, farm business planning and risk management, animal health and welfare, feed budgeting, on-farm stock water availability and management, soil and land management, irrigation and water use efficiency. In response to drought in 2018-20 the branch provided information and services through workshops, field days, discussion groups, one on one consultations, online resources, social and print media consultations were increased.

Smarter, Safer Farms is a \$20 million four-year initiative that will invest \$10 million to provide targeted training to build capability in financial literacy, risk management, farm planning and adaptation to climate change.

The Young Farmers program provides:

- Upskill and Invest Young Farmers Scholarship of up to \$5000 towards study and up to \$5000 to invest in putting new skills into practice, with professional development, business planning or other on-farm activities.
- The Young Farmer Mentoring program provides young farmers and new entrants the opportunity to be paired with an experienced farmer or 'mentor' to assist them in developing skills to better manage their farm businesses, identifying risks, and developing strategies to build resilience and achieve their business goals.
- Young Farmer boot camps aims to improve participants understanding in the fundamentals of farm business management.

### **Specific programs funded through the 2018-20 Drought Package**

Regional Drought and Dry Seasonal Conditions Coordinators program funded three coordinators to act as a key point of co-ordination at the local level, to provide information on drought services, support options, emerging risks and pressures in their region. The Coordinators engaged with local councils, State Government departments, the National Centre for Farmer Health, local water corporations, catchment management authorities, local health services, and the Rural Financial Counselling Service.

Farm Business Management and Planning Support program provided increased farm information and advisory services to support farmers during drought and build resilience through:

- Increased technical advice and farmer support through workshops, field days, events, online resources, social media and media sources
- Technical information and resources focusing on drought preparedness, farm business planning and risk management, animal health and welfare, feed budgeting, on-farm stock water availability and management, soil and land management, irrigation and water use efficiency
- Drought support services guides and information to signpost farmers to other additional services for the immediate and longer term
- Agriculture Victoria one-to-one consultations with farmers
- Support for farmer and farm-family health and well-being through collaboration with the National Centre for Farmer Health.

## Activity Summary – Role of the States and Territories (VIC)

### 10. Each state or territory is responsible for:

#### b. ensuring animal welfare and land management issues are managed during drought.

There is an expectation in Victoria that landholders will always address and take actions to minimise land management issues and ensure good animal welfare management. This includes during drought. A webpage is available to encourage farmers to protect the land in dry times. See <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/managing-for-and-during-drought/protecting-the-land-in-dry-times>.

The Land Health Program offers training, advice and information to dryland farmers and rural service providers, in the areas of farm planning, productive soils, farm water, grazing and pasture management, sustainable cropping and soil conservation. These services were increased, and part of the technical support provided during the 2018-20 Drought response.

Animal Health Officers are deployed to individual farmers in event of animal welfare concerns and will put in place management plans for feeding, selling, or culling.

#### **Specific programs funded through the 2018-20 Drought Package**

Grants were available for farmers, on the expectation of matching co-funding, to invest in infrastructure to support the establishment of Stock Containment Areas (SCA's). SCA's have become a common and well used strategy for livestock farmers to minimise the impact to ground and manage animal welfare.

The Pasture Management and Recovery Program provided grants of up to \$5,000 to implement approaches to assist in the recovery and restoration of severely impacted non-irrigated pastures because of drought.

Farmers were able to apply for a Drought Relief Authority to Control Wildlife permit, which had shorter processing times and more certainty, enabling them to protect pasture and crops from impacts caused by wildlife more easily. This initiative supported the control of wildlife through increased state-wide processing resources and a streamlined application process for drought affected areas under the Authority to Control Wildlife permit system. Extra staff were rolled out across the state to provide advice and support to communities feeling the effects of drought and dry conditions regarding wildlife management.

## Activity Summary – Role of the States and Territories (WA)

### 10. Each state or territory is responsible for:

#### a. encouraging the delivery and uptake of capability-building programs to improve farming businesses' skills and decision making that are flexible and tailored to farming businesses' needs.

The Plan Prepare Prosper program was a Western Australian Government-led strategic business planning program with contextualised and tailored content for different sectors of the agriculture industry. Over \$10.3 million was invested by the Western Australian Government from 2014-2019 following the conclusion of the Drought Pilot program.

DPIRD provides financial and in-kind support to industry associations who are delivering capacity building programs to their member. For example the Grains Industry Association of Western Australia receives annual funding to host Seeding Success program.

The Western Australian Government supported Financial Counselling Services for small businesses in regional Western Australia from 2018, providing \$111,111 for the service in 2019-20.



## Activity Summary – Role of the States and Territories (WA)

### 10. Each state or territory is responsible for:

#### b. ensuring animal welfare and land management issues are managed during drought.

Western Australia deploys veterinarians, welfare officers, and other regional technical staff as Animal Welfare Officers to monitor the condition and welfare of animals at risk from dry seasonal conditions.

The Western Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) offers a range of information at Outreach and Field Days and primary industry group meetings and workshops to appraise producers of season conditions and to support them in their business decision-making.

Western Australia has reinvigorated the Soil and Land Conservation Council and appointed a new Soils & Land Conservation Commissioner to manage landscape issues related to dry seasonal conditions.

DPIRD has developed a Wind Erosion strategy and working group to monitor the risk related to dry seasonal conditions and low groundcover.

Western Australia has also undertaken satellite ground cover monitoring through analysis of Modis & Landsat data and ground truthing to estimate risk of land degradation by monitoring ground cover.

An additional \$300,000 in grants has been provided to biosecurity groups to manage feral herbivores damaging farming infrastructure such as watering points.

## APPENDIX B

# Shared Roles

### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (Australian Government)

#### **11a. developing, designing, implementing and funding drought preparedness, response and recovery programs that are consistent with the NDA, encourage robust risk management and seek to avoid market distortions.**

Analysis by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences<sup>42</sup> (ABARES) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development demonstrates that Australian farmers receive very little subsidies and so operate in open and competitive markets which are relatively free from government distortions. In 2016-18 distorting forms of support accounted for 5 per cent of total support to the sector. And within this, Australia provided no market price support (that is, distortions from tariffs and quotas). Most of Australia's subsidies are in the form of input subsidies, primarily related to drought measures and on-farm water infrastructure investment or programs that seek to enhance producer risk management of Australia's uniquely variable climate, such as income tax averaging and FMDs (forgone tax expenditures).

The On-farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme (OFEWIR) provided eligible primary producers and horticulture farmers with one-off rebates for costs associated with the purchase and installation of on-farm water infrastructure that addresses animal welfare needs and/or improves horticulturalist's resilience to drought. It has been highly popular, with oversubscription in many jurisdictions. In 2019-20, the government supported over 5,600 farmers to be more water efficient and provide more effective animal welfare during drought through the payment of \$29.8 million in rebates.

Over a number of phases between August 2018 and January 2020, the Drought Communities Program Extension (DCPE) expanded eligibility to provide 180 local councils with either \$1 million or \$500,000 (depending on the population size of the Local Government Area) for drought relief projects. The program was designed to provide immediate economic stimulus in drought-affected communities by funding targeted, community driven, local infrastructure projects and drought-relief activities. The funding provided an immediate economic stimulus, created employment opportunities and kept money flowing through local shops and suppliers. The Australian Government committed \$297 million over four years from 2018-19.

The National Water Grid Authority (the Authority) commenced operation on 1 October 2019 to bring together world-best science to identify and plan the next generation of water infrastructure. More than \$3.5 billion has been committed towards co-financing nationally important water infrastructure with state and territory governments that are critical to building resilience in our regions and increasing water security for agriculture and primary industry. To 20 June 2020, this led to the commitment of 22 water infrastructure projects with a total Australian Government funding of more than \$1.5 billion. A further \$145.9 million was committed for 55 water infrastructure feasibility studies to identify financially viable and technically feasible water infrastructure projects.

The Improving Great Artesian Basin Drought Resilience projects that have commenced are building on the long legacy of improving the water resource efficiency of the Basin. During the first half of the 2019-20 financial year, the government worked closely with Basin states to successfully negotiate improvements to the program.

42 Greenville J, *Analysis of government support for Australian agricultural producers*, ABARES research report, Canberra, May, CC BY 4.0. <https://doi.org/10.25814/5ec71d9ccf774>.

### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (Australian Government)

The changes allow IGABDR to be more responsive to changes in the jurisdictional work plans and facilitate increased program uptake. In 2019-20 an initial seven projects in South Australia, worth \$847,531 of Australian Government funding were completed. There are multiple projects in train for completion in New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland in 2020-21.

The Interim Great Artesian Basin Infrastructure Investment Program Project Agreement committed up to \$6.4 million of Australian Government funding. An initial schedule identified 26 projects worth \$2.581 million however rainfall events impacted several landholders and their practical completion deadlines. At the conclusion of the program on 30 June 2020, 16 projects worth \$1.842 million of Australian Government funding were completed with an estimated 3.05 gigalitres water saving per year.

Under the Water for Fodder program, the Australian Government paid the South Australian Government to produce water from the Adelaide Desalination Plant. The water was made available to drought-affected farmers in the southern-connected Murray–Darling Basin to grow fodder, silage and pasture to maintain their core breeding stock. Under the program 40 gigalitres was made available to 800 farmers.

A report on the interim achievements of the program is available at [www.agriculture.gov.au/water/mdb/programs/basin-wide/water-for-fodder](http://www.agriculture.gov.au/water/mdb/programs/basin-wide/water-for-fodder).

Drought Communities Small Business Support Program is supporting small regional businesses affected by drought, bushfire or COVID-19 with targeted assistance to manage adjustment pressures and remain viable. Eligible businesses also have access to specialist third-party advice, such as financial planning, legal, specialist taxation and accounting advice. The Australian Government is investing more than \$12.785 million in small business financial counselling over 18 months: \$7 million to help small businesses in drought-affected areas improve their long-term viability and \$5.785 million to help small businesses recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19 or bushfire.

#### **11b. developing capability-building programs, tools and technologies to inform and improve farming businesses' decision-making and promote resilience**

\$4.2 million has been committed by the Australian Government over four years from 2019-20 to improve and maintain the National Drought Map (the Map). The Map is an online tool that brings together a range of data, such as hydrological, climatic, rainfall, soil and vegetation to support farmers and regional Australians to assist with decision-making and who to contact for support. It is able to provide the framework and infrastructure for collaboration and data-sharing across all levels of government and jurisdictions, and has capability to integrate additional data as needed.

In the 2019-20 Budget, the Australian Government committed \$77.2 million to enable the Bureau of Meteorology to install four new radars and accompanying rain gauges in Queensland. These radars will fill gaps in radar coverage and provide agriculture and related industries with improved access to real-time weather information, improve farming businesses' decision-making and promote resilience. Data from the radars will be incorporated into the National Drought Map, assisting in the development of drought indicators, and strengthening the Map's utility.

The Bureau of Meteorology, in collaboration with FarmLink and CSIRO, has created Regional Weather and Climate Guides that make it easier for locals to understand weather and climate trends in their areas. The guides provide farmers with information that helps to improve decision-making as they manage and adapt to weather and climate variability. The Climate Guides have been prominently positioned on the FarmHub website, making it easier for locals to understand weather and climate trends in their area.

## Activity Summary – Shared Roles (Australian Government)

### 11c provision of rural financial counselling services

The government has funded the RFCS for over 30 years. Not-for-profit RFCS providers deliver free and confidential financial counselling services to farmers, fishers, foresters and related small business owners, who are experiencing, or at risk of, financial hardship. Between 1 April 2016 and 30 June 2020 the RFCS assisted over 12,000 individual clients across 12 service regions. Up until July 2018, in any given month there were usually around 3,100 clients accessing the service nationwide. Since then, the demand has increased substantially. In 2018–19 the RFCS had more than 6,100 active clients, an increase on the previous year and in 2019–20 there were approximately 7,100 active clients.

In October 2019, DAWE released its report relating to the internal review of the 2016 to 2020 RFCS Program. The review was informed by a significant public consultation process, interacting with approximately 150 stakeholders. The review made 30 recommendations to improve program outcomes and the performance of service providers covering: service delivery; governance requirements; communication; and monitoring and evaluation. Recommendations and findings made in the review are now being used to design the next funding round starting 1 July 2021.

### 11d support to mitigate the effects of drought on the health and wellbeing of farming families and farming communities

On 28 January 2020 a \$57 million package was announced by Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison, providing support for farmers, small businesses, families and schools affected by drought around the country. Central to this was the extension of the Drought Communities Programme Extension (DCPE), funding local infrastructure projects, events and drought-relief activities to stimulate local economies and provide employment opportunities. At 30 June 2020, \$247 million had been committed in support of 180 LGAs across Australia.

Over a number of phases between August 2018 and January 2020, the Drought Communities Program Extension (DCPE) expanded eligibility to provide 180 local councils with either \$1 million or \$500,000 (depending on the population size of the Local Government Area) for drought relief projects. The program was designed to provide immediate economic stimulus in drought-affected communities by funding targeted, community driven, local infrastructure projects and drought-relief activities. The funding provided an immediate economic stimulus, created employment opportunities and kept money flowing through local shops and suppliers. The Australian Government committed \$297 million over four years from 2018–19.

In 2020 the Government also delivered \$138.9 million for additional Roads to Recovery funding in 128 DCPE eligible LGAs, providing rapid economic stimulus to drought affected councils.

Nine Australian Government Primary Health Networks (PHN) have received \$24.4 million, over two years from 2018–19 for the Empowering our Communities initiative to plan and commission community-led initiatives such as mental health first aid training, workshops, community recovery and resilience programs, as well as early intervention services to address the immediate support needs of rural and regional communities, and foster longer term recovery and resilience. Local community organisations responded positively to PHN engagement, facilitating various community-led projects supporting mental health, social and emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention initiatives.

Nine drought-affected communities are also benefiting from the Trusted Advocates Network Trial, with funding of \$463,815 over three years from 2018–19, across the same nine PHNs that received funding under the Empowering our Communities program. The Trial has enabled PHNs to partner with existing service providers to recruit and train 'Trusted Advocate' volunteers to offer peer support within drought affected communities. An evaluation of the Trial is underway with the final report due in April 2021.

\$1.2 million was allocated to expand Better Access Telehealth to allow all sessions of psychological therapies via video conferencing for those who face barriers to accessing services. \$3.6 million was allocated to expand the Medicare Benefits Schedule for General Practitioners (GP) to deliver psychological therapies via telehealth in rural and remote areas from 1 November 2018.



### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (Australian Government)

The Connecting Youth Awareness-raising Initiative provided \$225,000 in 2018-19 to ReachOut to inform young people, their families and communities in drought of digital (phone and online) mental health supports and services available to them. The program funding provided to ReachOut ceased on 30 June 2019. The Connecting Youth Awareness-raising Initiative was well received and reached more than 62,244 people during the activity period, with many more people being engaged offline at events and in their local communities.

In August 2018, the Australian Government committed \$15 million to the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) to deliver small grants to not-for-profit and community groups in drought-affected regions across Australia. This investment funded Rounds 11 to 22. Between December 2018 and June 2020, the FRRR awarded funding to 325 projects under the Tackling Tough Times Together (TTTT) program, with grant funding totalling \$9.28 million. Of this, \$7.32 million in Australian Government funds contributed to 243 projects.

Through the \$181.5 million Drought Community Support Initiative (DCSI) Rounds 1 and 2, the government supported over 39,000 drought-affected households, living or working in LGAs eligible for DCPE. DCSI payments of up to \$3,000 assisted farming households to meet urgent expenses, including for food, petrol and utilities. Round 1 of DCSI provided \$33 million between 17 December 2018 and 30 June 2019, and was delivered by The Salvation Army, the St Vincent de Paul Society and Rotary Australia, assisting 12,575 households. Under Round 2 in 2019-20, the Australian Government supported 26,670 households. Round 2 assistance has been provided by The Salvation Army and the St Vincent de Paul Society.

On 19 November 2019 the Australian Government announced a \$200 million round of the Building Better Regions Fund wholly and solely dedicated to helping communities hardest hit by drought. The extra funding helped to get local projects and infrastructure work underway to strengthen regional economies, keep people in work, and generate cash flow through local businesses. On 5 June 2020, 163 successful projects were announced, providing \$164 million to councils and \$43 million to non-for-profit organisations.

In June 2019, the government also provided the Country Women's Association of Australia (CWA) with a \$5 million one-off ad hoc grant to provide payments of up to \$3000 to drought-affected farmers and farming families to meet household expenses, such as food, utilities and school costs. This national program was not limited to DCPE areas and supported over 2,550 households.

The government hosted 72 Drought Community Outreach events across New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland in 2019. On 20 February 2020, the government announced a \$10 million grant for drought community outreach activities. A \$5 million one-off ad-hoc grant was provided to Rotary Australia in June 2020 to support outreach activities and commence delivery of vouchers to farming households impacted by the drought.

The Education Special Circumstances program supports non-government schools facing financial hardship as a result of ongoing drought conditions, including fee concessions for schools, boarding schools and additional counselling services. \$20 million was committed and expended in 2019-20. Non-government schools are also able to access special circumstances funding as a priority of the Government's new \$1.2 billion Choice and Affordability Fund. The Fund has begun providing the non-government sector with a flexible means of driving Government priorities and addressing specific challenges over 2020 to 2029, including the challenges faced by schools affected by natural disasters and other issues such as drought.

The Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) is designed to support continuity of child care, particularly in disadvantaged or vulnerable communities, where service viability is affected by an unforeseen or extreme weather event, or another event or circumstance, which would result in market failure for the community. \$5 million was made available through this fund for drought-affected early learning centres in 2019-20. In the 2020-21 financial year, CCCF Special Circumstances Grant Opportunity has a combined total of \$4 million in Special Appropriation funding for unforeseen events or circumstances, which includes support for drought.

## Activity Summary – Shared Roles (Australian Government)

### **11e sharing, coordinating, collaborating and communicating information on drought preparedness, response and recovery policies and programs being developed and implemented**

The convening of cross-government mechanisms and forums provides opportunities for sharing, coordinating, collaborating and communicating information on drought preparedness, response and recovery policies and programs being developed and implemented. These include AGMIN; AGMIN Working Group on Drought; AGSOC; Australian Government Standing Group on Drought; Australian Government Disaster and Climate Resilience Reference Group; Drought Finance Taskforce; Minister's Roundtable on Drought; FDF Consultative Committee; Drought Communications Network; Drought Communications and Engagement Cross-Government Group.

The establishment of the National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency in December 2019 is providing strengthened leadership and coordination of the government's drought response, recovery and preparedness activities. The Agency has established the Regional Recovery Officer (RRO) Network based in communities across Australia to serve as champions for their region, working with people to find locally-led solutions and deliver the support and information needed to help communities recover and prepare. Since their inception in March 2020 through to 30 June 2020, the Agency's RROs travelled over 27,150 kilometres of regional Australia, engaging with over 1600 stakeholders, across over 750 engagements and events, including engaging with the media on 20 occasions (noting COVID-19 significantly reduced travel). Further, more than 20 departments and agencies have been routinely engaged in comprehensive cross-governmental collaboration.

The Drought Community Outreach Events provide opportunities in regional Australia for farmers and community members to be heard confidentially as to how the drought has impacted them, while allowing for the comprehensive access a range of immediate and longer term support measures.

### **11f ensuring information on assistance for drought preparedness, response and recovery is accessible and readily available**

The Recovery Connect online tool aims to facilitate all individuals, small businesses and primary producers, who have been affected by drought across Australia to access and apply for support. The online tool provides information on drought assistance from the Australian Government, state and territory governments, non-government organisations, not-for-profit organisations and charities. It is able to tailor advice on available services and assistance based on the address or device location of the individual seeking support.

The NFF is delivering FarmHub, with a three year \$774,400 commitment from the Australian Government expiring in 2020-21. This investment has been seed funding to help start up and build the FarmHub website, informing farmers on farm risk management resources and drought support services. Over the course of its life, FarmHub has been viewed over 340,000 times by over 69,000 users.

### **11g ensuring consistency of drought policy and reform objectives and complementarity of drought preparedness, response and recovery programs**

In 2019-20 the Australian Government continued to monitor the effectiveness of drought policy settings and assistance measures, and some of the key improvements introduced include the establishment of the Agency and the RRO Network.

The Agency will continue to monitor and improve the timely, effective and coordinated delivery of assistance to Australians impacted by drought, and to prepare for future droughts. Working collaboratively with affected groups provides opportunities to better design, coordinate and deliver effective initiatives, while also helping communities better position themselves and respond to future droughts. This process has ensured a locally led, locally understood and locally implemented approach to drought policy and program design, ensuring charities, local governments, communities and farmers are informed, consulted and engaged.

#### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (Australian Government)

- 11h contributing to the development of quality, publicly available data, including but not limited to**
- i) weather, seasonal and climate forecasts**
  - ii) regional and local predictive real-time drought indicator information**
  - iii) a consistent early warning system for drought**
  - iv) an improved understanding of fodder crops and holdings across Australia.**

See 11b

#### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (ACT)

**11a. developing, designing, implementing and funding drought preparedness, response and recovery programs that are consistent with the NDA, encourage robust risk management and seek to avoid market distortions.**

ACT NRM administered the ACT Government-funded 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 ACT Rural Resilience Grants which supported ACT rural landholders to build capacity and improve infrastructure to better manage risks and impacts associated with drought, now and into the future. The ACT Government works closely with the ACT Rural Landholders Association to develop a range of training sessions, webinars, field visits and other activities to assist with drought preparedness and planning. The Rural Resilience Grants covered:

- Drought management and property planning advice to inform farm business decisions and/or on-ground work/infrastructure—up to \$5,000.
- On-ground works/infrastructure that reduce the immediate impact of drought and built longer term resilience of the farm business—up to \$10,000.

Under the 2018-2019 ACT rural resilience grants a total of 26 grants were paid out to ACT rural landholders valued at a total of \$150,000 and under the 2019-2020 ACT Rural Resilience Grants 17 landholders were supported to build farm resilience to drought to a total value of \$146,500.

The ACT Soil Moisture probe (described below) also assists landholders to make land management and stock management decisions based on locally relevant soil moisture and pasture growth projections.

ACT NRM promoted and administered the Australian Government's On-Farm Emergency Stock Water Rebate program in 2018/19/20.

Information about some of the drought preparedness opportunities are provided on the Farmer Support Package website: <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/act-nrm/grants-and-support-packages/act-farmers-support-package>

Approximately 15 editions of the ACT RALF newsletter which promotes information and capacity building opportunities to build farm resilience to drought were published and distributed: <https://actlandcare.org.au/subscribe-to-our-newsletter/>

## Activity Summary – Shared Roles (ACT)

### **11b. developing capability-building programs, tools and technologies to inform and improve farming businesses' decision-making and promote resilience**

The ACT Government works closely with the ACT Rural Landholders Association to develop a range of training sessions, webinars, field visits and other activities to assist with the continuous learning and development of rural landholders.

In 2018 ACT NRM established a soil moisture probe on a farm in southern ACT - this joined a network of soil moisture probes administered by NSW South East Local Land Services (LLS) in partnership with Farming Systems Groups on Monaro and Southern Tablelands.

The purpose of the soil moisture probe is to allow landholders to look at seasonal projections for pasture growth based on soil moisture and rainfall and make informed decisions on stock management, feed and ground cover management. This is a powerful tool in supporting land management and drought management. Data on the ACT soil moisture probe, located at Tidbinbilla can be found at: <https://farmingforecaster.com.au/>

ACT has promoted web-based training sessions and information about the probe at farmer meetings and through the ACT RLF newsletter.

### **11c provision of rural financial counselling services**

Due to the small size of the agricultural sector in the ACT, the ACT does not make any financial contributions to the RFCS. If ACT farmers want to access the RFCS they can utilise the NSW based service.

### **11d support to mitigate the effects of drought on the health and wellbeing of farming families and farming communities**

Mental health services can be accessed through general practitioners or primary care providers. Some people who are seriously affected by their illness can contact or be referred to a specialist mental health service provided by Canberra Health Services. Access Mental Health is the central point of entry to access mental health services and are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They will provide immediate help during a mental health crisis.

ACT rural landholders can also access mental health assistance through the NSW Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health Rural Adversity Mental Health Program.

### **11e sharing, coordinating, collaborating and communicating information on drought preparedness, response and recovery policies and programs being developed and implemented**

The ACT Government meets regularly with the ACT Rural Farmers Association to work together on farm management including drought. The ACT offers a range of direct support information sessions to further assist farm preparedness. Information on drought assistance is posted on the ACT Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) website and distributed to ACT rural landholders and communicated through the monthly ACT RALF Newsletter.

BRS and ACT NRM have run capacity building opportunities with Bureau of Meteorology which led to the development of a regional weather and climate guide. The delivery of two ACT Rural Resilience Grants programs in this reporting period (2018/19 and 2019/20) and the promotion of these opportunities through the ACT Farmer Support Package website: <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/act-nrm/grants-and-support-packages/act-farmers-support-package>.

Regular attendance by BRS and ACT NRM at the ACT RLA meetings to present information on drought, drought preparedness and opportunities (training/capacity building, grants and rebates, trials and demonstrations) that are currently available. This also provides an opportunity get feedback from rural landholders on their current circumstances and their needs.



## Activity Summary – Shared Roles (ACT)

### **11f ensuring information on assistance for drought preparedness, response and recovery is accessible and readily available**

Information on drought assistance is posted on EPSDD website ACT Farmers Support package web page: <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/act-nrm/grants-and-support-packages/act-farmers-support-package>. This information is also distributed to ACT rural landholders through direct emails and through the ACT RALF email newsletter - at least 15 editions of the newsletter have been distributed in this reporting period.

In addition BRS and ACT NRM regularly attend meetings of the ACT RLA to present information on drought, drought preparedness and opportunities (training/capacity building, grants and rebates, trials and demonstrations) that are currently available.

### **11g ensuring consistency of drought policy and reform objectives and complementarity of drought preparedness, response and recovery programs**

### **11h contributing to the development of quality, publicly available data, including but not limited to**

- i) weather, seasonal and climate forecasts**
- ii) regional and local predictive real-time drought indicator information**
- iii) a consistent early warning system for drought**
- iv) an improved understanding of fodder crops and holdings across Australia.**

In 2018 ACT NRM established a soil moisture probe on a farm in southern ACT - this joined a network of soil moisture probes administered by LLS in partnership with Farming Systems Groups on Monaro and Southern Tablelands. The purpose of the soil moisture probe is to allow landholders to look at seasonal projections for pasture growth based on soil moisture and rainfall and make informed decisions on stock management, feed and ground cover management. This is a powerful tool in supporting land management and drought management. The ACT soil moisture probe is located at Tidbinbilla: <https://farmingforecaster.com.au/>

ACT NRM has promoted web-based training sessions and information about the probe at farmer meetings and through the ACT RALF newsletter. This probe is accumulating searchable data which enables landholders and others in the community to see trends over time and to examine historic data.

Drought information and status for the ACT from NSW DPI using the NSW Enhanced Drought Information System (EDIS) and Combined Drought Indicator (CDI) has been requested to be shown on the NSW maps but has not happened as of yet.

## Activity Summary – Shared Roles (NSW)

### **11a. developing, designing, implementing and funding drought preparedness, response and recovery programs that are consistent with the NDA, encourage robust risk management and seek to avoid market distortions.**

The NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment Water group (DPIE-Water) manages and allocates the water resources of NSW. As a drought becomes more severe, the available water is managed to prioritise critical human water needs and in accordance with NSW water sharing priorities. During times of drought, river valleys are managed under the Extreme Events Policy. The Minister may also restrict the use of surface or groundwater (by order under section 324 of the *Water Management Act 2000*) to cope with a water shortage to prioritise remaining supplies for critical needs. DPIE-Water works in partnership with and provides technical and financial assistance to local water utilities in regional NSW to manage town water supplies during drought. This includes ongoing funding under the longer term \$1 billion Safe and Secure Program and during the drought some \$285 million in emergency drought funding.

### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (NSW)

Between 2018-19 and 2019-20, the NSW Government provided over \$327 million in loans to farmers and eligible businesses from the Farm Innovation Fund, Drought Assistance Fund Loans and Seafood Innovation Fund to enable longer term resilience. These loans were to help primary producers undertake infrastructure projects, make destocking decisions, and implement improved environmental management practices.

Over the reporting period the NSW Government provided additional support through fee and charge waivers, including Local Land Service rates, Farm Innovation Fund interest payments, Fixed Water Charges and Class 1A agricultural vehicles and for Fixed Water Charges, Class 1A agricultural vehicles, Apiary Fees and Wild Dogs fence fees.

LLS played a role in providing advice on program design and implementation. More consideration should be given to how programs are delivered to farmers to improve the uptake of programs to increase change at the farm level that drives reliance and improves risk management.

#### **11b. developing capability-building programs, tools and technologies to inform and improve farming businesses' decision-making and promote resilience**

LLS delivered direct support to farmers in using and understanding programs, tools and technologies and importantly implementing these to create change that makes a difference to building resilience at the farm level.

#### **11c provision of rural financial counselling services**

The Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) is a national service with 12 independent providers and three in NSW which provides free independent advice to primary producers including fishers and foresters. The NSW Government contributed \$840,000 in 2019-20. \$1.5 million has been contributed by the NSW Government for 2020-21, representing 32 per cent of the \$4.69 million core funding and an increase of approximately 62 per cent on the 2019-20 contribution of \$840,000.

#### **11d support to mitigate the effects of drought on the health and wellbeing of farming families and farming communities**

The NSW Government invested over \$14 million on the Emergency Drought Relief Mental Health Package (Package) across 2018-19 and 2019-20. The Package included a range of programs to support the mental health and wellbeing of people across rural and regional NSW. Programs included additional funding for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, community drought events in Western NSW, a youth drought summit coordinated by UNICEF Australia, the Royal Flying Doctors peer ambassadors program, and grants to sporting bodies to deliver mental health projects across drought affected areas of NSW. The Package also included additional Rural Adversity Mental Health Coordinators. The Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP) links people in regional and remote areas of NSW with mental health support services and provides mental health training. There are 19.5 FTE RAMHP Coordinators across the state. The Package including funding for farmgate counsellors and drought peer support workers to provide assertive outreach, coordination with local services and communities and ongoing support to individuals and their families. 28 FTE farmgate counsellor and peer support worker positions are employed across eight Local Health Districts. The Package was extended into 2020-21 with an additional \$11.93 million committed.

### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (NSW)

The Package also included additional Rural Adversity Mental Health Coordinators. The Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP) links people in regional and remote areas of NSW with mental health support services and provides mental health training. There are 19.5 FTE RAMHP Coordinators across the state. The Package includes funding for Farmgate Counsellors and drought peer support workers to provide assertive outreach, coordination with local services and communities and ongoing support to individuals and their families. 28 FTE farmgate counsellor and peer support worker positions are employed across eight Local Health Districts. The Package was extended into 2020-21 with an additional \$11.93 million committed.

The \$1.2 million Mental Health Sports Fund provided 23 grants to NSW-based sporting bodies for sport-led mental health, social and emotional wellbeing initiatives in regional NSW.

Financial support for eligible early childhood education and care services suffering due to drought has been provided.

The maintenance of staffing levels for the 2019 and 2020 school years for schools in areas of drought.

One-off \$1.5 million fund over 2019-20 for communities in drought-affected areas to run events that support community wellbeing and resilience.

Drought Support Program Teams provide free, mobile, and confidential support for regional and rural people impacted by drought.

The \$1 billion Safe and Secure Water Program funds a range of infrastructure projects to provide secure and sustainable water and wastewater services to regional NSW towns.

\$10 million for the installation of mobile desalination plants for the water-stressed towns of Brewarrina, Bourke and Walgett in north-western NSW to address water quality issues.

#### **11e sharing, coordinating, collaborating and communicating information on drought preparedness, response and recovery policies and programs being developed and implemented**

DPIE Water and WaterNSW websites provide extensive information and data to the public on water management, allocations and drought update information.

The NSW Drought Hub website is a one-stop online portal for NSW Primary Producer drought assistance and information.

LLS played a major role in assisting landholders understand what information was available, where to find it and how to interpret it. LLS organised or had a presence at the majority of drought related community and information events. Due to LLS local and boots on the ground presence producers would come to or call LLS staff and offices for advice and assistance in the first instance.

#### **11f ensuring information on assistance for drought preparedness, response and recovery is accessible and readily available**

The NSW Drought Hub is a one-stop online portal for NSW Primary Producer drought assistance and information.

The Enhanced Drought Information System has been used to track drought conditions across NSW over the past three years. It has become an essential information and planning service for Government, Communities and for many farm managers.

While not directly responsible for the information itself, LLS played a major role in assisting landholders understand what information was available, where to find it and how to interpret it. Due to LLS local and boots on the ground presence producers would come to or call LLS staff and offices for advice and assistance in the first instance.

#### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (NSW)

##### **11g ensuring consistency of drought policy and reform objectives and complementarity of drought preparedness, response and recovery programs**

NSW is currently conducting rigorous evaluations of its drought programs, as well as the Government's broader response to drought. The evaluations will consider consistency of drought policy and reform objectives and complementarity of measures.

Additionally, any new drought policy initiatives and programs must comply with NSW's Water Strategy as well as the outcomes budgeting framework. This ensures policies strategically allocate budget resources and are not duplicative or misaligned with existing obligations under NSW and Australian Government frameworks.

##### **11h contributing to the development of quality, publicly available data, including but not limited to**

- i) weather, seasonal and climate forecasts**
- ii) regional and local predictive real-time drought indicator information**
- iii) a consistent early warning system for drought**
- iv) an improved understanding of fodder crops and holdings across Australia.**

NSW DPI has an ongoing program called the Enhanced Drought Information System (EDIS) which aims to continually improve drought monitoring and early warning services, supporting improved drought preparedness measures in NSW. EDIS Mark I has been used extensively by its core stakeholder groups (grower, industry and government) during the 2017-2020 drought.

DPI developed the Drought and Supplementary Feed Calculator (V1 in 2014 and V2 in 2019), an app that provides advice to sheep and cattle producers regarding the nutritional value from various supplementary feed options. This app allows producers to make informed decisions surrounding feed purchases given different livestock classes and was a key tool during the recent drought.

The Farm Tracker app was launched in October 2018 to help primary producers record seasonal conditions. Using the app, primary producers can: complete a simple crop, pasture or animal survey, keep and manage a photo diary of their farm and monitor the same paddock over many years. Reports can be completed in a few minutes and they are synchronised with a personal database as well as the statewide database when within mobile or wi-fi range.

DPIE-Water's drought stages provide an indication to water licence holders of the application of increasing drought restrictions and measures in the regulated river valleys and the Barwon-Darling. This signals the actual stage of drought that valley is currently in. WaterNSW is developing an additional system for signalling the risk of worsening conditions in a valley.

#### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (NT)

##### **11a. developing, designing, implementing and funding drought preparedness, response and recovery programs that are consistent with the NDA, encourage robust risk management and seek to avoid market distortions.**

The NT Government has assisted in driving 94 applications from primary industries to uptake the Australian Government's On-farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme that builds animal watering infrastructure. This has delivered over \$1.2 million in support for the NT pastoral industry.

The NT *Pastoral Land Act* sets out that pastoral rent can be reduced or waived if payment of the full amount will result in serious hardship. Hardship relief waivers because of drought commenced in the first quarter of 2020.

## Activity Summary – Shared Roles (NT)

### **11b. developing capability-building programs, tools and technologies to inform and improve farming businesses' decision-making and promote resilience**

Capacity building and early warning are the emphasis of the Northern Territory Government drought related programs delivered by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade. The Department produces a quarterly Pastoral Feed Outlook advisory. Outlooks reflect a region-by-region summary of current feed conditions, pasture growth data, emerging drought or fire risk, and seasonal outlook across the entire Northern Territory.

The Department conducts livestock carrying capacity assessments for cattle stations and provides customised assessments and reports for sustainable livestock carrying capacity and property development options. Ten pastoral enterprises availed themselves to this service in 2019, and another five in 2020 (despite the complications imposed by the pandemic).

More than 100 phone and email enquiries relating to carrying capacity and grazing advice were received by DITT in 2020.

Grazing Land Management courses are regionally-customised and accredited training courses developed by MLA, and are delivered by the Department to further develop the knowledge and skills of producers in sustainably and profitably using natural resources for beef production.

The Department has been testing and demonstrating research-derived grazing land management recommendations on the Old Man Plains Research Station in arid Australia, and investigating the effect of various grazing strategies in the consistent production of premium beef under an extreme variable climate.

### **11c provision of rural financial counselling services**

Agribusiness Development has also overseen the Territory's role with the Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) which has provided free independent and confidential support and business analysis to Northern Territory producers and small rural businesses. The program receives majority funding by the Australian Government with co-contribution from the Northern Territory Government. It has enabled increasing numbers of primary producers, including those who have experienced financial difficulties as a result of drought, and more recently the CoVID-19 pandemic to access expert financial advice.

The RFCS has an advisor employed by Rural Business Support SA, based in the NT, who services the primary producer and small rural business sectors. They have 30 case clients presently on their books.

### **11d support to mitigate the effects of drought on the health and wellbeing of farming families and farming communities**

No specific drought dedicated service is provided by NT Government, instead it directs people to investigate a number of public and non-government health and psycho-social services at the following link:  
<https://nt.gov.au/industry/agriculture/farm-management/rural-assistance-and-support-services>



## Activity Summary – Shared Roles (NT)

### **11e sharing, coordinating, collaborating and communicating information on drought preparedness, response and recovery policies and programs being developed and implemented**

Professional staff from the Agriculture Division routinely collaborate with research, development and extension (RD&E) providers and private consultants to bring additional expertise to the NT to benefit our primary industry sectors.

Examples include:

- NT DITT is a partner in the Northern Australia Climate Program managed by the University of Southern Queensland's Queensland Drought Mitigation Centre as part of the Drought and Climate Adaptation Program (DCAP). Other partners include Meat and Livestock Australia, the Australian Bureau of Meteorology, UK Met Office, CSIRO, QDAF and WA DPIRD.
- Livestock Industry Development Services (LIDS) has current and recent research, development and extension collaborations with ACIAR, UQ, UNE, CQU, CDU, CSIRO, QDAF, WA DPIRD, Territory NRM, Rangelands NRM and several NT Landcare groups.
- There are three Ministerially-appointed Pastoral Industry Advisory Committees that work with DITT researchers to guide the RD&E activities of the department and contribute input to national priorities for RD&E as part of the North Australian Beef Research Council. DITT staff routinely present new RD&A information to these committees.
- FutureBeef website, a collaboration between MLA, NT DITT, QDAF and WA DPIRD, is as a knowledge hub for the north Australian beef industry showcasing best practice beef industry information.
- Department Rangelands Officers, Livestock Extension Officers and Stock Inspectors undertake property visits to provide advice on a range of issues including animal husbandry, animal welfare, livestock carrying capacity, forage budgeting, grazing land management, infrastructure development.

### **11f ensuring information on assistance for drought preparedness, response and recovery is accessible and readily available**

The Department has established online information portals on the following:

- Rural Financial Counselling Services - <https://nt.gov.au/industry/agriculture/farm-management/rural-assistance-and-support-services>
- Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme - <https://nt.gov.au/industry/agriculture/farm-management/get-financial-help-farm-businesses/water-infrastructure-rebate>
- The Northern Territory Pastoral Feed Outlook - <https://dpiir.nt.gov.au/primary-industry/primary-industry-publications/northern-territory-pastoral-feed-outlook>

### **11g ensuring consistency of drought policy and reform objectives and complementarity of drought preparedness, response and recovery programs**

The Department has core policy representation links through to Australian Government Senior Officers panels on a wide range of relevant policy themes including drought and animal welfare. It also has the necessary financial and corporate capabilities to assist in various aspects of project management, record keeping and finances around current activities such as the OFEWIR, as well as for upcoming initiatives under the Future Drought Fund.

#### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (NT)

- 11h contributing to the development of quality, publicly available data, including but not limited to**
- i) weather, seasonal and climate forecasts**
  - ii) regional and local predictive real-time drought indicator information**
  - iii) a consistent early warning system for drought**
  - iv) an improved understanding of fodder crops and holdings across Australia.**

The Department produces a quarterly Pastoral Feed Outlook advisory. Outlooks reflect a region-by-region summary of current feed conditions, pasture growth data, emerging drought or fire risk, and seasonal outlook across the entire Northern Territory. This is distributed to pastoralists email networks, industry peak bodies and local agri-business services providers. <https://dpiir.nt.gov.au/primary-industry/primary-industry-publications/northern-territory-pastoral-feed-outlook>

The Department also has an agronomist dedicated to improved pasture and fodder production for grower contact.

#### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (QLD)

- 11a. developing, designing, implementing and funding drought preparedness, response and recovery programs that are consistent with the NDA, encourage robust risk management and seek to avoid market distortions.**

The Queensland Government operates the Drought and Climate Adaptation Program (DCAP). This program is the principal program of research/development and extension to support drought preparedness of primary producers and the delivery of Queensland's obligations under the NDA. Queensland conducted a Drought Program Review to identify the best policy and programs for drought preparedness for future droughts. The Queensland Government response to the Drought Program Review can be found on the website: <https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/drought-program-review-report/resource/f776c8ed-670d-4b9e-91ef-4dae429365dc>

DCAP is a \$21 million program. With the addition of current partner contributions it reaches \$69 million to undertake research, development and extension to assist producers integrate new tools and technology that will assist business planning to manage drought and climate risk. Projects include:

- The inside edge for graziers to master Qld's drought prone climate
- Drought resilience and adaptation: A program of social research and knowledge support
- Northern Australia Climate Program
- Delivering integrated production and economic knowledge and skills to improve drought management outcomes for grazing systems
- GrazingFutures: Promoting a resilient grazing industry
- Forewarned is forearmed: Proactively managing the impacts of extreme climate events
- Using paleoclimate data to prepare for extreme events and floods in Queensland
- Crop insurance - Researching and developing innovative and affordable insurance products tailored to Queensland's cropping and horticulture industries.
- Use of BoM multi-week and seasonal forecasts to improve management decisions in Queensland's vegetable industry.

### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (QLD)

Farm Debt Restructure Office is a free service to assist struggling producers in financially restructuring their business position.

The Long Paddock Website centralises drought and climate data, decision support tools, and information on services to manage climate and drought risk.

FutureBeef provides the north Australian beef industry with key information and tools to assist with making on-farm changes that improve business performance.

#### **11b. developing capability-building programs, tools and technologies to inform and improve farming businesses' decision-making and promote resilience**

The Drought and Climate Adaptation Program (DCAP) provides research, development and extension to assist producers integrate new tools and technology in to business planning, see section 11a above.

#### **11c provision of rural financial counselling services**

The Queensland Government provides a co-contribution to the RFCS as well as a number of special programs for drought, tourism, small business and COVID-19 RFCS positions.

#### **11d support to mitigate the effects of drought on the health and wellbeing of farming families and farming communities**

Grants to support community drought recovery are available through the Community Drought Support Program. Although now permanently funded and no longer counted as measures under its overall Drought Assistance Package, the Queensland Government provides funding for the Drought Wellbeing Service of the Royal Flying Doctors Service and the Tackling Regional Adversity through Integrated Care program.

- Royal Flying Doctor Service Drought Well Being Service delivers mental health and community services in remote drought areas.
- The Tackling Regional Adversity through Integrated Care (TRAIC) program coordinates and provides support for mental health services in rural communities impacted by adverse events. TRAIC includes local grants to help community groups deliver mental health services.
- The \$5.2 million per year Communities Drought Support Program grants for community and social programs in drought impacted regions.

#### **11e sharing, coordinating, collaborating and communicating information on drought preparedness, response and recovery policies and programs being developed and implemented**

The Long Paddock website ([www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au](http://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au)) provides drought and climate data, decision support tools and information services to better manage climate risk such as drought.

DAF website, Business Queensland and Future Beef websites provide information and tools to help producers manage drought risks.

Drought and Climate Adaptation Program's research, development, and extension programs deliver improved forecasting ability and drought risk mitigation strategies for business planning.

FutureBeef provides the north Australian beef industry with key information and tools to assist with making on-farm changes that improve business performance.

### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (QLD)

#### **11f ensuring information on assistance for drought preparedness, response and recovery is accessible and readily available**

The Queensland Government operates the Drought and Climate Adaptation Program. This is the principal program of research/development and extension to support drought preparedness of primary producers and the delivery of Queensland obligations under the NDA. All DCAP information and other climate related information is available on the Long Paddock website. Other more general extension advice including drought management is available from the [daf.qld.gov.au](http://daf.qld.gov.au) website.

#### **11g ensuring consistency of drought policy and reform objectives and complementarity of drought preparedness, response and recovery programs**

Queensland conducted a Drought Program Review to identify the best policy and programs for drought preparedness for future droughts. Implementation of recommendations of Drought Program Review postponed due to COVID 19 restrictions to 1 July 2021.

#### **11h contributing to the development of quality, publicly available data, including but not limited to**

- i) weather, seasonal and climate forecasts**
- ii) regional and local predictive real-time drought indicator information**
- iii) a consistent early warning system for drought**
- iv) an improved understanding of fodder crops and holdings across Australia.**

The Queensland Government portal [www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au](http://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au) has extensive information for producers to access on weather, seasonal forecasts and other drought information. Central to DCAP is the establishment of the Queensland Drought Mitigation Centre, a partnership between the Queensland Government (Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Department of Environment and Science) and the University of Southern Queensland.

The Queensland Drought Mitigation Centre is working with Australia's and the world's best climate modellers to improve and make more reliable regional seasonal climate forecasting for agriculture in Queensland and across northern Australia. Specific projects are focused on forecasting multi-year droughts and the creation of a combined drought index (CDI) to better measure the impact of drought. Of note, DCAP has delivered quality research on historical climate conditions to gain a better understanding of the risks of drought and research to improve predictions of multi-year drought.

### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (SA)

#### **11a. developing, designing, implementing and funding drought preparedness, response and recovery programs that are consistent with the NDA, encourage robust risk management and seek to avoid market distortions.**

The South Australian Government provided a number of funding measures as part of its \$21 million Drought Support Package over 2019-2020 and 2020-21. The Council Rate Rebate Scheme, Pastoral Lease Rent Rebate Scheme, the Connecting Drought Communities Events Grant program and the On-farm Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme (jointly funded with the Australian Government) were designed to provide targeted stimulus to agricultural regions that would result in a wide range of economic and social benefits for communities during a period of significant hardship.

The Rural Financial Counselling Service, Farm Business Management program, ifarmwell digital toolkit, Farm Business Strategic Review and Family and Business Support program in particular had a strong focus on robust risk management and decision making.

### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (SA)

In December 2021, the SA Government announced it would match the Australian Government funding for the On-farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme, increasing the rebate, from 25 per cent to 50 per cent (or up to \$50,000) and providing a significant incentive for eligible primary producers to purchase and install new water infrastructure and improve drought resilience.

The \$1.838 million Pastoral Lease Rent Rebate Scheme provides 50 per cent rebates for Pastoral Lease Rent for all pastoralists. \$759,000 of this funding was committed for the 2019/20 financial year, and \$773,000 for the 2020-21 financial year. \$2.525 million in funding was committed in the 2019/2020 financial year for a Council Rate Rebate Scheme which provided a 50 per cent rebate on council rates for primary producers currently receiving the Farm Household Allowance.

Driven by the Small Business Commissioner to support farmers, the Multi-Peril Crop Insurance Stamp Duty Waiver builds drought resilience and helps to manage periods of financial hardship during drought.

#### **11b. developing capability-building programs, tools and technologies to inform and improve farming businesses' decision-making and promote resilience**

Farm Business Management Program is a \$300,000, 12 month program that is providing training that will enable farm businesses to manage and prepare for drought, climate change and variability by supporting their long-term sustainability and resilience. Participants will undertake a strategic review of their business and develop a business plan specific to their needs and situation. The business plan will address business risk management, identify opportunities for improvement and guide on-farm implementation. This will ensure a smooth transition from drought into recovery and back to business as usual, or better. The program will run from June 2020 to July 2021.

In 2018-19 and 2019-20 South Australia co-invested with industry bodies in a Drought Strategic Business Review program for the dairy, grains and pork industries, providing financial literacy and resilience training in rural drought affected areas

Both of these programs build participant skills in relation to decision making, business planning, risk management, succession planning and other areas relating to financial literacy and business resilience.

Family and Business Support (FaBS) Program funds Mentors to provide non-clinical counselling support and business support to farmers and where appropriate refer them to relevant government or industry support services. The FaBS mentors help address a critical support gap by connecting those affected by drought and other adverse events to available financial and mental health services, local health networks, government and non-government assistance, as well as community organisations and donations. By providing this support service, the Government has reduced a workload which was otherwise being met in the first instance by RFCS counsellors.

The FaBS Program has been delivered by PIRSA since 2018, with the program currently funded to 30 June 2021. There are currently 14 Family and Business Support Program (FaBS) mentors working across South Australia, 9 supporting drought and 5 support bushfire affected communities.

The ifarmwell online tool is a pre-existing tool that has been funded by Government and the private sector. PIRSA has provided ifarmwell with a \$200,000 grant to improve platform useability and delivery. Ifarmwell is a free evidenced- based online toolkit designed specifically for farmers to help them cope effectively with life's challenges, especially when faced with adverse events such as drought. The program has been developed by Dr Kate Gunn from the Department of Rural Health at the University of South Australia. Family and Business Support Mentors and Rural Financial Counsellors have been trained to use the ifarmwell tool.



### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (SA)

Capacity building is also supported through numerous means, including water efficiency programs, support for the management of soils and minimising soil erosion, pest management and land restoration. This is delivered within the partnership arrangements between Landscape Boards, PIRSA and DEW.

The South Australian government is collaborating with the Australian Government to improve irrigated horticulture businesses knowledge of water markets to improve decision making in procuring water and utilising it most effectively.

#### **11c provision of rural financial counselling services**

The Rural Financial Counselling Service provides business support that builds farm business skills and decision making capability. The State Government's current ongoing annual commitment for RFCS is \$260,000. The State Government, through PIRSA, also committed \$500,000 for the 2019/20 period as part of the \$21 million Drought Support Package.

#### **11d support to mitigate the effects of drought on the health and wellbeing of farming families and farming communities**

PIRSA Drought Health and Wellbeing Sub-Committee is a collaborative inter-departmental representative group combining Office of Chief Psychiatrist, Country Health SA, the Australian Government's Primary Health Network, Department of Education, and Human Services and Housing to coordinate community drought support.

Community Drought Recovery Events is a program investing \$330,000 to provide small grants (of up to \$10,000) to community organisations to undertake community drought recovery events and activities. Such events are opportunities to identify people who may be in need of further support and build community resilience.

The ifarmwell online tool is a pre-existing tool that has been funded by Government and the private sector. PIRSA has provided ifarmwell with a \$200,000 grant to improve platform useability and delivery. Ifarmwell is a free evidenced-based online toolkit designed specifically for farmers to help them cope effectively with life's challenges, especially when faced with adverse events such as drought.

The Family and Business Support program funds mentors to provide non-clinical counselling support to farmers and where appropriate refer them to relevant government or industry support services. The FaBS mentors help address a critical support gap by connecting those affected by drought and other adverse events to available financial and mental health services, local health networks, government and non-government assistance, as well as community organisations and donations.

#### **11e sharing, coordinating, collaborating and communicating information on drought preparedness, response and recovery policies and programs being developed and implemented**

Within South Australia, a number of government agencies participated in health and charity working groups, drought community action groups, bank forums, and working groups with farming systems organisations being important forums for sharing information and collaborating.

Chaired by the State minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, the Dry Conditions Working Group combines the knowledge, ability, and networks of government and industry to best coordinate representative support and measures for drought in SA.

Landscape Boards and PIRSA work closely with regional communities to provide extension, capacity and engagement events and specific tools to support resilience and drought preparedness.

The SA Drought Hub is a portal for primary producers to access drought assistance information. Department of Environment and Water provides extensive information to the public on water management and water allocations.

## Activity Summary – Shared Roles (SA)

### **11f ensuring information on assistance for drought preparedness, response and recovery is accessible and readily available**

Information on drought preparedness, response and recovery is accessible and readily available through the PIRSA Regional Offices – [https://pir.sa.gov.au/top\\_menu/contact\\_us/regional\\_offices](https://pir.sa.gov.au/top_menu/contact_us/regional_offices)

The South Australian government has invested in a 24-hour Drought Hotline (1800 931 314) that supports primary producers and community who have been impacted by the drought.

The Drought Hub is a centralised website that contains the latest information regarding health and wellbeing, financial and farming advice and resources for those impacted and affected by the drought - [https://www.pir.sa.gov.au/grants\\_and\\_assistance/drought\\_support](https://www.pir.sa.gov.au/grants_and_assistance/drought_support)

### **11g ensuring consistency of drought policy and reform objectives and complementarity of drought preparedness, response and recovery programs**

A Dry Conditions Working Group has met on a regular basis since it was established in 2018, with representation from government agencies including the Local Government Association of South Australia, SA Health, Department of Environment and Water, Landscape Boards, and the Bureau of Meteorology. Industry bodies are also in attendance at these meetings. This group ensures that policy is developed across South Australian government that is consistent with the principles of reform, and complementary to existing support. Industry bodies are also in attendance at these meetings.

Regular meetings were held with interstate and Australian Government departmental officials. The Chief Executive of PIRSA is a representative on the AGSOC where various policy matters are considered and evaluated.

The Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development has attended all AGMIN/ AMM forums.

### **11h contributing to the development of quality, publicly available data, including but not limited to**

- i) weather, seasonal and climate forecasts**
- ii) regional and local predictive real-time drought indicator information**
- iii) a consistent early warning system for drought**
- iv) an improved understanding of fodder crops and holdings across Australia.**

PIRSA provides a drought map on its website, which provides an assessment of the areas in the state that are identified as drought affected and is accessible by any jurisdiction.

PIRSA also publishes a Crop and Pasture Report every second month. The report provides a summary of regional conditions across the state, including weather, timing and extent of rainfall, soil moisture, surface cover and erosion and other drought related data.

PIRSA generates regular adverse events reporting. The PIRSA Adverse Events Recovery Framework outlines a staged approach to managing drought. The Framework defines triggers for when an area is considered to be experiencing drought conditions and the criteria for each phase of drought – these are based on socio, economic and meteorological indicators. The Drought Map and Crop and Pasture report reflect this analysis.

DEW and PIRSA work closely to develop soil erosion information on a monthly basis available to Landscape Boards, key sectors and stakeholders.

## Activity Summary – Shared Roles (TAS)

### **11a. developing, designing, implementing and funding drought preparedness, response and recovery programs that are consistent with the NDA, encourage robust risk management and seek to avoid market distortions.**

The Tasmanian Government has continued to undertake a state-wide program of irrigation development financed using a public-private funding model that combines Tasmanian and Australian Government funding with private capital from the sale of water entitlements. Irrigation development is one of the keys to managing seasonal rainfall variability and reducing the vulnerability of Tasmanian agriculture and rural communities to drought, capitalising on Tasmania's relatively abundant water resources.

In 2018-19 and 2019-20 the Tasmanian and Australian Governments committed a total of \$185 million (including \$85 million from the Tasmanian Government) towards five new irrigation schemes under Phase One of the Pipeline to Prosperity program.

In September 2019 the Tasmanian Government announced a drought relief package valued at \$750,000 and comprising:

- \$150,000 to the Rural Relief Fund to assist farming families in crisis with basic household and farm business expenses.
- \$20,000 to the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association to upgrade its Tasmanian Fodder Register and deliver drought community support events
- \$80,000 to Rural Alive and Well to extend its mental health and wellbeing outreach services to drought-affected communities.
- \$150,000 to the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture to assist drought affected farmers with in-drought strategies, as well as farm planning and practical tools for post-drought rebuilding of farm productivity in a changing climate.
- \$350,000 in targeted drought weed management support from the Tasmanian Weeds Action Fund.
- Workshops and practical support with on-farm and catchment-wide water management strategies, delivered by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment.

The in-drought support measures were informed by the National Drought Agreement's principles and processes for in-drought support (Attachment B to the Agreement).

### **11b. developing capability-building programs, tools and technologies to inform and improve farming businesses' decision-making and promote resilience**

The Tasmanian Government has developed a range of digital Enterprise Suitability Maps to help farmers and prospective investors to analyse potential crop or enterprise options for a property or district. The maps are available state-wide for twenty different crops and publicly available free of charge through the Land Information System Tasmanian (LIST). Maps are based on 'crop rules' for each crop and incorporate climate projections. Users can view the maps, zoom into specific locations and overlay other useful data sets. Enterprise Suitability Maps promote resilience by helping farm businesses to select the most suitable crops and enterprises for a given location now and under future climate change scenarios.

### **11c provision of rural financial counselling services**

The Tasmanian Government contributed \$85,000 p.a. in core funding in 2018-19 and 2019-20 to the Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) delivered by Rural Business Tasmania. A further \$100,000 was provided to the RFCS in 2019-20 to assist small rural and regional businesses impacted by COVID-19. The latter funding was able to assist rural and regional businesses impacted by drought and COVID-19.

## Activity Summary – Shared Roles (TAS)

### **11d support to mitigate the effects of drought on the health and wellbeing of farming families and farming communities**

The Tasmanian Government continued to fund Rural Alive & Well (RAW), a not-for-profit organisation helping individuals, families and communities through mental health issues with a focus on suicide prevention. RAW started in 2007 as a community-driven response to severe drought and was incorporated in 2009. The philosophy of RAW is “talk to a mate”, which it enacts through RAW outreach workers visiting vulnerable people at their home or farm where they are more likely to be comfortable to engage as trust and rapport are developed. RAW coordinators also work within rural communities to initiate community wellbeing programs and activities. The Government’s September 2019 drought relief package included an extra \$80,000 to RAW to extend its outreach services to drought-affected communities.

The September 2019 drought relief package also included a \$150,000 contribution to the Rural Relief Fund administered by Tasmania’s RFCS service provider, Rural Business Tasmania. The Fund assists farming families in crisis with direct household and farm business expenses.

### **11e sharing, coordinating, collaborating and communicating information on drought preparedness, response and recovery policies and programs being developed and implemented**

The Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment participates in the Forum of Rural Stakeholders, an informal network of rural stakeholders convened by Tasmania’s RFCS service provider, Rural Business Tasmania. The Forum meets at least quarterly to discuss seasonal conditions and coordinate responses to emerging challenges, including drought. The Minister for Primary Industries and Water has personally attended some Forum meetings.

The Tasmanian Government participates in intergovernmental processes to promote coordination and share information on drought policies and programs at a national level. Nonetheless, there is scope to increase collaboration and information-sharing between states and territories.

### **11f ensuring information on assistance for drought preparedness, response and recovery is accessible and readily available**

In 2018-19 the Tasmanian Government committed \$860,000 over four years to establish a primary producer hotline (the FarmPoint Hotline) and base two new AgriGrowth Liaison Officer positions in northern Tasmania, which accounts for around 80 per cent of Tasmania’s agricultural production by value. Together they provide a single point of contact and referral for primary producers seeking information or Government assistance. AgriGrowth Liaison Officers regularly attend industry and community events (including community drought events) to share information, answer questions and gather intelligence to inform future program delivery.

In 2019-20 the Tasmanian Government provided \$20,000 to the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association to upgrade its online Feed and Fodder register to include agistment opportunities and deliver drought community support events. The Feed & Fodder register FAQs include information on managing through dry conditions.

The Department of Primary Industries, Parks Water and Environment website contains information on the Tasmanian Government’s in-drought support measures and managing seasonal conditions.

#### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (TAS)

##### **11g ensuring consistency of drought policy and reform objectives and complementarity of drought preparedness, response and recovery programs**

The Tasmanian Government participates in intergovernmental processes to promote coordination and consistency of drought-related measures between jurisdictions. Duplication or overlap between Australian Government and Tasmanian Government programs is not a major concern. As an island state, Tasmania faces fewer challenges in ensuring complementarity of drought preparedness, response and recovery programs with other states and territories.

The Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment participates in quarterly meetings of the Forum of Rural Stakeholders (refer to response to 11e) to ensure complementarity of drought preparedness, response and recovery programs within Tasmania.

##### **11h contributing to the development of quality, publicly available data, including but not limited to** **i) weather, seasonal and climate forecasts** **II) regional and local predictive real-time drought indicator information** **III) a consistent early warning system for drought** **iv) an improved understanding of fodder crops and holdings across Australia.**

The Tasmanian Government is participating in the coordinated national approach to supporting the agriculture sector to adapt to climate change and manage emissions.

#### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (VIC)

##### **11a. developing, designing, implementing and funding drought preparedness, response and recovery programs that are consistent with the NDA, encourage robust risk management and seek to avoid market distortions.**

The Back to School Support provided support to 9,163 students with the cost of uniforms, shoes and other items. The uptake of the program was 100 per cent of all eligible students.

Camps, Sports and Excursion Fund provided \$375 to 12,957 students from 76 government and non-government schools.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy was provided to 627 students who resided in or attended a kindergarten program in Wellington and East Gippsland shires for 15 hours per week during 2019. In addition, 34 Financial Hardship grants of \$10,000 were approved for eligible community based, not for profit kindergarten services so that they could remain open and operational. Many of these services were the only kindergarten service in town and are integral to these communities.

On-Farm Infrastructure Support Grants and On-Farm Drought Resilience Grant Program assists farm businesses invest in on-farm drought preparedness and resilience, pasture management and recovery, and farm business planning. Over 4,350 farmers received a \$5,000 grant under this program.

The Household Financial Relief program provided direct financial relief up to \$3,000 to households and families affected by drought through the Country Women's Association.

The Local Government Service Support Payment provided local governments in Central, East Gippsland, and the Millewa with flexible support payments for drought affected farmers and communities.



### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (VIC)

The Farm Business Management and Planning Support Services program provided technical farm management and decision-making support.

Farm Machinery Improvement Grants assisted farm businesses to maintain essential on-farm machinery and equipment in the Millewa region.

#### **11b. developing capability-building programs, tools and technologies to inform and improve farming businesses' decision-making and promote resilience**

Technical and Decision-Making Support for Farmers delivered state-wide activities to assist with drought preparedness and response through workshops and one-on-one consultations. More than 4,800 farmers have been engaged in these activities since May 2018.

Catchment Management Authority Drought Employment Program provided short term, off-farm employment and training for farmers, farm workers and individuals affected by drought to expand or obtain transferable employment skills.

The Farm Employment Exchange Pilot matched employers seeking employees and farm workers seeking alternative work due to drought.

#### **11c provision of rural financial counselling services**

The Victorian Government is a long-term funder and active program manager of the Victorian Rural Financial Counselling Service, funding the equivalent of 35 per cent of Australian Government core funding.

Additional funds were provided in response to demand generated by drought, bushfire, and industry downturn and in addition to a boost of core service it funded the delivery of a Small Business Financial Counselling service and a Dedicated Dairy Support program.

#### **11d support to mitigate the effects of drought on the health and wellbeing of farming families and farming communities**

The Victorian government delivered local community mental health services, first aid training and rural outreach in drought affected areas. A range of training, forums and community connectedness events have been delivered to assist community members, service providers and business owners to better understand the mental health system and how to support someone to seek appropriate help. Examples include mental health first aid, psychological first aid, suicide postvention workshops, as well as guest speakers at events.

The Look Over the Farm Gate program provided communication activities, community grants and education activities.

The Victorian Government funds the National Centre for Farmer Health to provide national leadership to improve the health, wellbeing and safety of farm men and women, farm workers, their families. Additional funding has been provided to the Centre to deliver targeted drought support programs including Health and Lifestyle Assessments, community workshops and AgriSafe Clinics.

The Community Priorities Fund supports small community infrastructure projects and community events.

## Activity Summary – Shared Roles (VIC)

### **11e sharing, coordinating, collaborating and communicating information on drought preparedness, response and recovery policies and programs being developed and implemented**

The Victorian Government operates a Drought Interdepartmental Co-ordination Group to discuss seasonal conditions and design whole of government responses for implementation and delivery.

Regional Drought Coordinators were appointed during the 2018-20 Drought Response to work with stakeholders to ensure measures effectively targeted affected households, businesses, and communities. The Coordinators were also required to engage and collaborate with local councils, State Government departments, the National Centre for Farmer Health, local water corporations, catchment management authorities, local health services, and the Rural Financial Counselling Service.

In 2019 the Victorian Government appointed Mr Peter Tuohey as the Rural Assistance Commissioner (RAC). The RAC provides advice to the government about the challenges and opportunities facing rural communities. This advice is informed by extensive stakeholder engagement and representation on behalf of the Minister for Agriculture.

Victoria is supporting farmers in their decision-making process through a series of dry seasonal conditions focused information, delivered through climate workshops, forecasting tools, and webinars.

### **11f ensuring information on assistance for drought preparedness, response and recovery is accessible and readily available**

Agriculture Victoria provides drought preparedness and response information that is accessible and readily available via:

- A website, <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/managing-for-and-during-drought>
- its Customer Service Centre,
- a dedicated drought support email address,
- online enquiry form,
- targeted ready reckoner on support available by location
- its extension offices and regional offices
- running workshops and drop-in centres.

Agriculture Victoria have written and distributed over 130 media releases and technical articles relating to the drought, conducted over 180 media interviews, and generated more than 1000 print and online media articles relating to drought.

### **11g ensuring consistency of drought policy and reform objectives and complementarity of drought preparedness, response and recovery programs**

Victoria's drought preparedness and response framework aims to help the farming community be better prepared for and capable of responding to difficult seasonal conditions. The design and development of any drought response measure must be consistent with this policy aim.

#### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (VIC)

- 11h contributing to the development of quality, publicly available data, including but not limited to**
- i) weather, seasonal and climate forecasts**
  - ii) regional and local predictive real-time drought indicator information**
  - iii) a consistent early warning system for drought**
  - iv) an improved understanding of fodder crops and holdings across Australia.**

Relevant programs led by Agriculture Victoria include:

- The Break seasonal update and forecast outlook products and services continue to be delivered to farmers and has over 4000 subscribers.
- Agriculture Victoria in collaboration with GRDC delivered a new Using Seasonal Forecasts project to extend the Break climate extension products to create customised versions for SA, Tas and southern NSW.
- providing information to farmers in the form of newsletters and updates. One example is the soil moisture monitoring program that monitor soil moisture and provides timely information to farm businesses on the website and by a newsletter.

#### Activity Summary – Shared Roles (WA)

- 11a. developing, designing, implementing and funding drought preparedness, response and recovery programs that are consistent with the NDA, encourage robust risk management and seek to avoid market distortions.**

Dry Season Response - Operating Since 2018 - Wheatbelt and South Coast

- Interdepartmental response monitoring, collecting intelligence on seasonal conditions including water management, livestock, cropping and horticulture.
- Satellite ground cover monitoring – analysis of Modis & Landsat data and ground truthing to estimate risk of land degradation by monitoring ground cover.
- DPIRD lead interdepartmental working group on rural water supply.
- Co-ordinate information on seasonal conditions and impacts to inform best response
- Data Analysis to quantify water demand for livestock and cropping across the South West Land Division.
- Water Security – Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) administers NOFEWIRS: water audit rebates
- Water Deficiency Declared (WDD) Areas, at the time of preparing this report WA had eleven WDD areas across the Shires of Lake Grace, Ravensthorpe, Kent, Dumbleyung, Jerramungup and Esperance (2020 had unprecedented twelve WDD)
- In response to WDD, water carting for emergency animal welfare needs occurred at a total cost of \$3.5m since June 2019 across the Great Southern.

Ongoing research that is contributing to improving water use efficiency and yields of crops in the face of decline growing season rainfall, increasing temperatures and increased incidence and geographic spread of frost - grains, horticulture, livestock (RDC funded projects).

Economic option analysis of on-farm water supplies during dry seasons for the Wheatbelt.

## Activity Summary – Shared Roles (WA)

### **11b. developing capability-building programs, tools and technologies to inform and improve farming businesses' decision-making and promote resilience**

The Western Australian government employs Modis Satellite data and Landsat fractional cover reporting to estimate risk of land degradation by monitoring ground cover.

Internet of Things Decision Agriculture Grants Initiative is improving local climate information for farming decision making through funding grants to increase the number of sensor networks across the region in primary production regions. Data being utilised to better inform decision making on-farm.

Collaboration and partnership with Bureau of Meteorology across 176 DPIRD Weather Stations and Doppler Radar weather sites that provide timely, relevant and local weather data to growers and regional communities. Increasing capacity for informed decision making. The eConnected Grainbelt project will provide for

- the installation of 3 new Doppler Radars in the Wheatbelt (Newdegate, South Doodlakine & Watheroo)
- an upgrade of 3 Coastal radars (Geraldton, Albany & Esperance)

This investment is in the order of \$2.5m including decision support systems and supporting extension.

DPIRD's systems modelling team integrate weather information into computer models and decision support systems and respond to extreme weather events such as frost, drought and floods. Creation of innovative products such as wind speed durations maps informing industry and DPIRD of erosion potential of high winds from significant storm events and analysis of changes in rainfall intensity impact on farm water harvesting of surface water utilising Australian CliMate App, University of Southern Queensland.

The DPIRD Weather Station App has been designed and implemented to provide live streaming weather data. It will assist in real-time decision making for primary producers and industry.

### **11c provision of rural financial counselling services**

The Australian Government's Rural Financial Counselling Service Program provides grants to state and regional organisations to provide free rural financial counselling to primary producers, fishers and small related rural businesses who are suffering financial hardship and who have no alternative sources of impartial support.

The Australian and the Western Australian Governments jointly fund the Rural Financial Counselling Service Western Australia (RFCSWA).

## Activity Summary – Shared Roles (WA)

### **11d support to mitigate the effects of drought on the health and wellbeing of farming families and farming communities**

Over \$1m in rural assistance programs including Regional Men's Health Initiative (RMHI) and social support, engaging more than 13,000 men annually throughout Western Australia. RMHI holistically approaches health care for boys and men in rural and remote areas. Collaborates and incorporates an Intergovernmental approach, combining resources from a number of sectors to ensure appropriate and relevant support where it's needed.

Wheatbelt Mens Health was formed in May 2002 and has been delivering the Regional Men's Health Initiative (RMHI) since July 2010. The objectives of the reform align with the core work that RMHI does in rural & regional WA. These 5 objectives are:

- Assist farm families and primary producers adapt to and prepare for the impacts of increased climate variability.
- Encourage farm families and primary producers to adopt self-reliant approaches to manage their business risks.
- Ensure that farm families in hardship have access to a household support payment that recognise the special circumstances of farmers.
- Ensure appropriate social support services are accessible to farm families.
- Provide a framework for jurisdictions responses to needs during periods of drought.

Through University of Western Australia an exploration is underway into the link between climate and rainfall and the impact on mental health and the use of hospital services. This will inform State level planning for drought in to the future.

### **11e sharing, coordinating, collaborating and communicating information on drought preparedness, response and recovery policies and programs being developed and implemented**

DPIRD's Dry Season and weather/climate outlook webpage provides information and resources and social support directories for primary producers and the general public, with up to date information about the coming season and its potential impacts on cropping and agriculture.

<https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/dry-seasons-and-drought/seasonal-climate-information>

In 2019 DPIRD prepared a managing dry conditions support services directory <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/sites/gateway/files/2376-19%20Managing%20dry%20conditions%20%E2%80%93202019%20support%20services%20directory%20brochure%20WEB.pdf>

In January 2020 DPIRD updated a Western Australian Rural Health, Financial and Information support directory <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/sites/gateway/files/WA%20rural%20health%20financial%20information%20support%20directory%20updated%20January%202020.pdf>

Additionally the webpage to house Western Australian government information and services such as publications, grants and assistance programs available.

<https://www.wa.gov.au/service>



## Activity Summary – Shared Roles (WA)

### **11f ensuring information on assistance for drought preparedness, response and recovery is accessible and readily available**

Western Australia actively promotes the FarmHub website and the State's Dry Season and weather/climate outlook information and resources and social support directories for primary producers and the general public, with up to date information about the coming season and its potential impacts on cropping and agriculture.

<https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/dry-seasons-and-drought/seasonal-climate-information>

In 2019 DPIRD prepared a managing dry conditions support services directory <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/sites/gateway/files/2376-19%20Managing%20dry%20conditions%20%E2%80%93%202019%20support%20services%20directory%20brochure%20WEB.pdf>

In January 2020 DPIRD updated a Western Australian Rural Health, Financial and Information support directory <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/sites/gateway/files/WA%20rural%20health%20financial%20information%20support%20directory%20updated%20January%202020.pdf>

Additionally the webpage to house Western Australian government information and services such as publications, grants and assistance programs available.

<https://www.wa.gov.au/service>

### **11g ensuring consistency of drought policy and reform objectives and complementarity of drought preparedness, response and recovery programs**

DPIRD are applying the approach and coordination of program activities into one work area to enable consistency, provide clarity of policies and complement programs supporting research and adoption practices to navigate a drying climate.

New drought programs and initiatives must comply with WA's State outcomes as well as the outcomes budgeting framework to ensure policies strategically allocate budget resources, and are not duplicative or misaligned with obligations under existing WA and Australian Government frameworks.

Western Australia provides water carting services through the Water Corporation when needed for small towns where the local water scheme relies on rainfall storage. Once the town's own water supply recovers, carting ceases.

<https://www.watercorporation.com.au/Our-water/Climate-change-and-WA/Climate-and-Southern-WA/Great-Southern/Responding-to-climate-change>

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER)'s rural water planning section manages programs to assist with water supplies for stock and emergency requirements

<https://www.water.wa.gov.au/planning-for-the-future/rural-water-support>

## Activity Summary – Shared Roles (WA)

### **11h contributing to the development of quality, publicly available data, including but not limited to**

- i) weather, seasonal and climate forecasts**
- ii) regional and local predictive real-time drought indicator information**
- iii) a consistent early warning system for drought**
- iv) an improved understanding of fodder crops and holdings across Australia.**

Much of Western Australia's research is focused on building resilience in a drying climate with more variable seasonal rainfall and temperatures.

In grains research alone this is around \$7.5 million per annum, including research in:

- Emerging weeds, pests and diseases and their management
- Re-engineering soils to improve water and nutrient flow to crops
- Increasing farming system profitability and the longevity of benefits following soil amelioration
- Crop establishment, phenology (maturity) and sowing times, and managing frost and heat in crops

Western Australia also has research programs supporting similar areas in horticulture, livestock and aquaculture.

DPIRD is committed to sharing Data that is collected by and maintained by DPIRD during these activities. Details on how to register are located on DPIRD's website <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/apis/api-terms-and-conditions>

DPIRD provides up-to-date information about the coming agricultural season and its potential impacts on cropping and agriculture. DPIRD Climatologists provide statistical seasonal rainfall forecasts, modelled plant available soil water and the risk of frost. <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/dry-seasons-and-drought/seasonal-climate-information>

The popular Pastures from Space service has been re-released by DPIRD, with a new zoom-in function so landholders can assess food on offer (FOO) and pasture growth rates (PGR) down to 6.25 hectares.

The new function also features an interactive satellite map, rather than the previous static map, as a result landholders can more accurately assess the pasture coverage on their property.

The images are provided by the Western Australia Land Information Authority, known as Landgate and are updated weekly and can be accessed via DPIRD's website for free.

<https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/sheep/understanding-pastures-space-south-west-western-australia>

