

Our Ref: 19_043



Government of South Australia
Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges
Natural Resources Management Board

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Dear Consultative Committee,

Re: Drought Resilience Funding Plan 2020 to 2024 Consultation Draft Feedback

Thank you for providing the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges (AMLR) Natural Resources Management Board (the Board) the opportunity to comment on the Drought Resilience Funding Plan 2020 to 2024 Consultation Draft.

Under the *Natural Resources Management (NRM) Act 2004*, the Board is responsible for ensuring that policies are consistent with the NRM Act and the region's NRM Plan. The Board commends the Government on developing the Drought Resilience Funding Plan: to strengthen drought preparedness and resilience with an emphasis on helping Australian farmers and communities. It is encouraging to see an initiative proposed that considers long-term solutions to the drought issue and building resilience to climate change, rather than repeated annual cycles of drought assistance to farmers.

Some initial feedback on the Plan is provided below:

- The Board welcomes the recognition of the impacts that climate change will have on agriculture as described in the plan.
- The Board is supportive of the Funding Principles as detailed in the Plan and feels that they provide a significant basis to offer proactive support to Australian farmers.
- The focus on a whole-of-Government approach to drought resilience is encouraging. It is recommended that similar approaches are adopted for other rural and regional stressors and climate change impacts, such as fires, significant disease outbreaks, and floods.

Further comments on specific sections of the Plan are provided in the attached table. Should you require further information on any aspects of the submission please contact Mrs Solange Cricelli, Senior Policy Officer on 8226 8547.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Felicity-ann Lewis'.

Felicity-ann Lewis
PRESIDING MEMBER

**Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board Comments-
Drought Resilience Funding Plan 2020 to 2024**

Plan section	Comments
Funding Principles (Page 12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board is supportive of the funding principles. The basis for the Funding Principles is sound and will provide proactive support to Australian farmers and a renewed focus on a whole-of-government approach to drought resilience. • The Board suggests that flexibility is maintained in the distribution of funds, as specified in the Future Drought Fund Act 2019.
<i>Economic resilience</i> (Page 15)	<p><i>Objectives & Actions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board recognises that climate <u>and weather</u> data are both important.
<p><i>Environmental resilience</i> (Page 9)</p> <p>(Page 16-17)</p>	<p><i>Strategic Priority:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board commends the inclusion of a strategic priority about Environmental resilience for sustainable farming landscapes. • AMLR recommends the inclusion of a reference (even simply a dot point under ‘controlling feral animals’) to managing conflicts with abundant native species in this section. One of the primary concerns for many livestock producers across temperate SA is kangaroo management. There are also growing concerns in the horticulture sector regarding the impact of grey headed flying foxes. Native species conflicts are a growing issue in many areas across Australia. • It is also recommended that ‘pest plants’ are included in this section. Weeds pose a biosecurity impact on industry and profitability, this impact has the potential to be heightened during drought. <p><i>Objectives & Actions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board is supportive of the objectives and actions under this Strategic Priority, including the ability for the fund to provide an opportunity for capacity building in natural resource management and business management to be delivered as a cohesive program. These activities are often siloed through different funding streams/ organisations, the approach detailed in the Plan is welcomed. • It is worth considering how the funding will be best delivered to maximise capacity building and impact of the funding. On-ground natural resources management staff have relationships with farming groups and landholders, and could potentially provide a pathway for delivery at the regional level. Based on the region’s experience, it can be difficult for new faces to come into the sector in tough times, and if there are multiple agencies talking to the same groups about the same topics. The existing National Landcare Program Service Providers for NRM regions across Australia may offer a mechanism for delivery of funding or programs on-ground if required. The most effective delivery will be through coordinated approaches, with the farming communities and landholders being the focus of all actions. State-level activities and cross-regional coordination may be able to assist with coordinated delivery. • This section would benefit from a brief mention of ‘abundant native species’ and/or managing wildlife conflicts. AMLR experience has been that enhancing biodiversity supports farm resilience during dry times in many situations.

	<p>However native wildlife conflicts can also present a major challenge (rising kangaroo impacts on pasture/crops being a common example). Sometimes impacts are substantial and sometimes minor impacts at a time of stress create an inflated perception of damage; this distinction can be difficult for producers to decipher and the added complexity of managing native animals (legal protections, permits etc.) often leads to either illegal ‘underground’ management or a feeling of hopelessness and no management. This is a critical area for government support in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ support farmers negotiating the additional complexities of managing abundant native species, and ○ ensure management is appropriate in the broader biodiversity context. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● With regards to Macropod management, the board suggests that the above point can be rolled into a broader discussion around managing livestock in the context of wild large herbivores (including pests like feral goats, feral deer and feral pigs) through the terminology of “total grazing pressure”.
<p><i>Social Resilience</i> (Page 17-19)</p>	<p><i>Objectives & Actions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● AMLR staff and activities in the region have shown to play an important role in providing opportunities for social engagement, both individually between staff and farmers, and through group capacity building activities like field days and workshops and with industry and agriculture networks. It is recommended that approaches such as this are included in the Plan. ● AMLR’s experience with social resilience building, evaluation of training and science suggest that the largest impact is through established groups. Experience also shows that the largest impact in supporting farmers in tough conditions is when relationships are established with them. This supports the intent of the Plan to provide investment in ongoing support; not just in the ebbs and flows of drought, fires or other events. ● It is recommended that key organisations or examples are included to be more tangible and specific, e.g. service clubs (Apex, Rotary, Lions, Zonta etc.), agricultural bureaus / farming systems groups, country shows, sporting clubs.
<p>Other Feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Board supports and welcomes the recognition of the impacts that climate change will have on agriculture as described in the plan. ● The triple bottom line approach is commended. It is important the complex and inter-related nature of the Strategic Priorities is considered when funding activities and projects. ● The Board recommends that the Plan highlights the benefits of having innovative approaches together with sound established business practices. ● Drought resilience is a national issue that needs to be shared by everyone, it is recommended that the Plan highlights this point. ● While the Plan is for drought, the resilience measures outlined are also applicable for other times of rural and regional stress, for example fires, significant disease outbreak, floods and other events that significantly impact communities. It is recommended that similar approaches are adopted for these rural and regional stressors, or an integrated Climate Change Resilience Fund. ● The social licence section is an emerging topic and perhaps warrants a more comprehensive approach. It is suggested that the latest research from Deanna Lush’s scholarship work is included/referenced.

- The references are largely about farming and management, however there are no references to resilience. The Board suggests that references are included to add rigour, science and references around what is backing up the resilience building approach.