



## Submission to the Australian Government re Draft Drought Resilience Funding Plan for the Future Drought Fund

Alexandrina Council is a widely respected local government body delivering high quality services to our constituents. We are committed and willing to meet the expectations of our local communities, including economic, environmental and social resilience to the impacts of drought. We commend the Australian Government on the Future Drought Fund initiative and appreciate the opportunity to share ideas about how we can potentially contribute to the desired outcomes of the Fund.

Located 85 kilometres from Adelaide on the Southern Fleurieu Peninsula, the region has a dramatic and expansive coastline, rich agricultural hinterland and significant freshwater assets in the form of the Lower Lakes, River Murray and their tributaries. Close knit communities and heritage townships are pride of place for the 27,000 residents who call Alexandrina home.

### ALEXANDRINA AT A GLANCE ...

- Federal Electorate of Mayo
- Home of 'Storm Boy' and the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth
- One of the largest regional Councils in SA with approximately \$50 million annual turnover
- \$1 billion local economy driven by agriculture, tourism, health and social services
- Strong social capital with 28% volunteerism rates
- State Electorates of Finnis, Heysen, Hammond and Mawson
- Home of the SA Wooden Boat Festival at the iconic Goolwa Wharf
- Population of 27,000 residents at average growth rate of 1.3% (sea change and tree change impacts)
- Ageing region with a median age of 51 years (being 11 years above the State average of 40 years).
- High seasonal visitation to pristine natural attractions and appealing destinations

As our population and local economy grows, it is at the forefront of our Community Strategic Plan 2014-23 to deliver services in line with our four key aspirations – Innovate throughout our Region; Participate in Wellbeing; Activate our Spaces; and Thrive in Clean, Green Futures. These aspirations include supporting a resilient economy, and proactive approaches to climate change, biodiversity and protection of water resources – all of which are relevant to this initiative.

### *Future Drought Fund Initiative*

Alexandrina Council and community were irrevocably affected by the impacts of the Millennium Drought and have been strong advocates since that time for the establishment and implementation of the Murray Darling Basin Plan, as the best hope for managing the complexities of water resources for Basin communities

Alexandrina Council welcomes the establishment of the Future Drought Fund as a means of supporting and sustaining communities to prepare, adapt to and manage the impacts of climate change and drought. Alexandrina Council believes that as the level of government closest to the community, it is expert and efficient in catalysing the 'incremental, transitional and transformational change' sought by the Fund to build capacity to deal with drought

We have recently successfully applied for \$1 million of funding under the Drought Communities Program to improve irrigation systems, activate a local river foreshore and establish a Business Enterprise Centre in Goolwa to act as a focal point for the many small and micro traders who are the backbone of the Alexandrina economy.

We have successfully implemented major capital projects, part funded by Australian and State Governments including the Fleurieu Aquatic Centre, demonstrating on our ability to achieve regional economic and social outcomes for Australia through infrastructure

We have for many years been successful providers of Commonwealth Home Support Program services, funded by the Australian Government demonstrating our links into community and our ability to perform to required standards

We also run an annual small grants program across a range of areas such as arts, culture, heritage, environment and events and believe we have the governance practices to act as an auspicer or intermediary for Australian Government funding to communities.

### *Drought Resilience Funding Plan*

Alexandrina Council and its communities would be a prime candidate for the Drought Resilience Funding Plan as currently drafted

The vision to achieve 'an innovative and profitable farming sector' speaks to our strong and critical agricultural sector who contribute substantially to our \$1 billion economy including wine and grape production, dairy, horticulture, cropping, sheep and cattle

Further the recognition of the need for a 'sustainable natural environment and adaptable rural communities . with increased resilience to the impacts of drought' is highly relevant to Alexandrina given our proximity to, and reliance on the River Murray, Lower Lakes and our iconic Murray Mouth

Alexandrina Council already has strong links with our community We auspice an advisory body comprised of community and elected members called the Alexandrina Sustainable Agriculture Roundtable (ASART) that considers the local impact of issues like drought and natural resource management. Alexandrina Council also has an Environmental Advisory Panel and a comprehensive

Environmental Action Plan that considers locally achievable actions for water, biodiversity, climate and living locally

Having reviewed the three strategic priorities, we are encouraged to see the focus on a holistic triple bottom line approach to resilience and have the following comments

Strategic priority Economic resilience for an innovative and profitable agricultural sector

Alexandrina Council supports the proposed actions and the intention to 'deliver on this objective at all levels – from farm and community to regional and industry'

Alexandrina Council, as a local government body, could assist achieve these actions through its networks with community and emerging resources like the Business Enterprise Centre We could potentially, with the right funding model, support programs to reach the agricultural sector in Alexandrina

In a changing climate, urgent attention must be given to how agricultural productivity targets can be met in a water-constrained future Innovation in the use of alternatives (such as recycled water sources) should be prioritised, in order to maximise socio-economic benefits for regional communities whilst mitigating risks to the health of freshwater eco-systems, particularly within the Murray Darling Basin

Strategic priority Environmental resilience for sustainable farming landscapes

As a region fortunate to be rich in natural resources, we support the proposed actions and recognition of the value of 'sustainable agricultural landscapes'

Alexandrina Council is a close collaborator with natural resource management boards, soon to be Landscape Boards in South Australia, and encourages consideration of these bodies as a vehicle to provide funding and partnerships to achieve outcomes in this strategic priority In line with the SA State Government's 'back to basics' approach to natural resource management, we offer strong support for incentives that will encourage practice change to build sustainable landscapes

In addition, the Fleurieu region is fast becoming a leader in the trial and adoption of regenerative farming techniques and we would support the fund having a focus on soil health in order to build ecological and climate resilience

Strategic priority Social resilience for resourceful and adaptable communities

Alexandrina Council commends the Australian Government for recognition of the need to 'maintain and improve the wellbeing and social fabric of rural and regional communities' The Millennium Drought had a very tangible impact on the confidence of the Alexandrina community to survive and recover and rebuild Actions such as those proposed to enhance community facilities, very much fall within the remit of local government We are currently updating our community strategic plans – called Alexandrina 2040 - and such initiatives are emerging as much sought after by community Places and associated events and activities, offer opportunities for people to come together, playing a critical role in enhancing a sense of community belonging They also encourage engagement with, and attachment of, visitor populations to our community and its attractions – which is essential to a region such as ours

Alexandrina Council has a strong track record in delivering on initiatives and outcomes for both Australian and State Governments and encourage the *Drought Resilience Funding Plan* to be sufficiently flexible and tailored to allow for local government involvement, collaboration and potentially funding partnership.

Alexandrina Council thanks the Australian Government for consideration of our submission.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a horizontal line with a small loop at the end and a vertical stroke crossing it near the start.

**Mayor Keith Parkes**  
Alexandrina Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Glenn Rappensberg' in a cursive style.

**Glenn Rappensberg**  
Chief Executive Officer, Alexandrina Council