

13 December 2019

The Consultative Committee
Future Drought Fund
Australian Government

Dear Consultative Committee,

RE: Response to Future Drought Fund – Drought Resilience Funding Plan, 2020 to 2024 Consultation Draft.

The Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CMA) would like to commend the work that has gone into preparing this document. Please accept the following as the Corangamite CMA's response to the Future Drought Fund – Drought Resilience Funding Plan. We look forward to finding out how the Corangamite CMA can be involved once further details become available.

In reviewing the document we would like to highlight the following:

1. The principles are supported due to their fundamental nature and promote innovation rather than subsidisation. Of particular note are the focus on triple bottom line principles and the objectives of delivering public good.
2. The concept of favourably considering proposals that have enduring outcomes is also supported, as is ensuring all new knowledge is shared and made freely available. Mention should be made of the role that research and development can contribute to building drought resilience and the importance of knowledge exchange in enabling change to more resilient and sustainable systems. Landcare has a key role to play in this process.
3. A focus on good decision making and the adoption of risk management principles are also supported as proactive tools to help build economic resilience especially when climatic conditions are factored in. Having a variety of options available ensures that the economic resilience of the property can be maintained under a range of scenarios.
4. Increasing farmer's understanding of their farm businesses and how they can make them more resilient to drought will also provide a benefit for longer term management and adaptation to the effects of climate change. The role of research and development in enabling this needs to

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be more clearly articulated. The promotion of innovation is also a key area that should be supported, especially when considering changing weather patterns in both the short and long term. Consideration of the extension and adoption mechanisms will be crucial to support farmers becoming innovative when transitioning their enterprises.

5. Supporting the improvement of the natural resource base for long term productivity, landscape health and sustainability are sound principles, and may provide an advantage to markets and accessing supportive funding. The support for incentives that change practises to those that help build sustainable landscapes is in line with this thinking.

6. Supporting processes that promote the value of ecosystem services has merit especially if these services are delivered by natural systems. The expansion and protection of existing natural systems could also be facilitated if the farmers managing the land on which these systems occur gained some form of support or advantage.

7. Concepts including regenerative agriculture, permaculture and stewardship should also be supported as a means of achieving the outcomes of this program and need to be supported and promoted to enable their adoption.

8. A key focus of this program should be the management of soil under a range of climatic considerations to ensure that when favourable climatic conditions return, that the key element in farm production has not deteriorated during the drought period.

9. The objective of improving social resilience and the actions associated with it are strongly supported. The communities within drought affected areas will be a key driver in determining how land is managed, how farmers can be supported and what that community needs to do to ensure its long-term viability. These communities need to be able to influence how external forces, influences and support are utilised to build their resilience.

10. Victorian Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) could be a key player in the delivery of elements of the Future Drought Fund. CMAs provide the bridge between identifying and promoting sustainable agriculture practices on-farm. Projects are largely underpinned by sound evidence-based knowledge, with practice change strategies developed that aim to reduce the impact of farming on the environment through restoring soil health, enhancing soil quality and fertility. The need to ensure that resilience to drought and climate change, and the long-term goal of economic prosperity for farmers is also critical. CMAs regularly collaborate such as with the current state-wide project being undertaken titled “Enhancing sustainable agricultural systems and resilient businesses for Victorian farming communities”.

In 2016 the Corangamite CMA in conjunction with all other Australian NRM groups, including Victorian CMAs, developed Natural Resource Management (NRM) Plans for Climate Change,

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funded by the Australian Government's Planning for Climate Change. The plan for the Corangamite region (Corangamite Natural Resource Management Plan for Climate Change) can be found at <http://www.ccma.vic.gov.au/Publications/Other-Strategies-Plans/Climate-Change-NRM-Strategy.aspx> . The Corangamite CMA has also been involved in the development of the South West Climate Change Portal which is a collaboration between the local government authorities of south-west Victoria, the Corangamite and Glenelg-Hopkins CMAs and the Centre for eResearch and Digital Innovation. The portal's aim is to be an enabling tool that provides regionally specific climate change information that can be used by NRM and other planners, land managers and community groups, as well as those working directly with community groups, to help the south-west region adapt to a changing climate and drought. The portal can be accessed at <http://www.swclimatechange.com.au/> .

Both of these planning tools support the Corangamite Regional Catchment and Waterway Strategies to form a key part of our regional NRM planning framework. These strategies take a region wide and place based approach to planning so that implementation of priority actions considers the diversity of needs and approaches across the region. The renewal of these strategies in collaboration with regional stakeholders and the community provides a starting point for identification of potential projects under the Drought Resilience Funding Plan within the Corangamite region.

CMAs have valuable networks and welcome the opportunity to partner with a wide range of specialist research and extension organisations, agricultural industry associations and agencies, service providers, and importantly farmer groups and farming communities.

CMA staff often have unique skill sets that offer the opportunity to contribute significantly to collaboratively focused sustainable agriculture projects. These include key expertise in soil health and sustainable land management practices, farming systems landscape monitoring, community and group engagement and facilitation. Furthermore CMA staff live within regional and rural communities. CMAs are also well experienced in project management and delivery, impact assessment, monitoring and evaluation.

CMAs are well experienced in supporting farming groups and communities in the transition to highly productive sustainable based farming systems, to help ensure longer-term business viability and can collectively offer the opportunity to develop a state-wide approach to developing and coordinating sustainable agriculture project initiatives.

Victoria's CMAs have identified a range of characteristics that need to be incorporated into future project design and management:

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- need to incorporate the use of multi-disciplinary teams, including partners who offer unique skills sets and expertise
- a range of skills (and project experiences) with relevant project methodologies and past experiences that can be used to develop rigorous projects
- a state-wide focussed program
- strong agricultural industry and farmer organisational/group ownership in project design and delivery
- project delivery that engages multiple partnering organisations and farming communities from government, the private sector, community groups and individual farmers.

The characteristics outlined above should be a key consideration for planning how investment programs in developing drought resilience are rolled out.

We look forward to any opportunity to provide further assistance in the finalisation of this document and to assist with its implementation. Please do not hesitate to contact Helen Watts, General Manager Planning and Strategy on helen.watts@ccma.vic.gov.au or 1800 002 262.

Yours sincerely

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