

# Submission to the Drought Future Fund Consultative Committee

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## Introduction

The Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) was established in 2000 and exists because every Australian deserves access to the same opportunities, regardless of their location. FRRR uses three levers to influence better outcomes for people living in rural, regional and remote Australia:

1. Grants and capacity building for not-for-profits and community leaders
2. Insights and learning; connecting policymakers, communities, and funders with ideas, knowledge and lived experience
3. Brokering and leveraging funding by harnessing FRRR's tax status, knowledge and networks to support innovation, self-generation and unlock more giving to address rural, regional and remote Australian community needs

Our approach is rooted in the tenet that local people are best placed to know what will make the greatest impact in their community.

Since its inception in 2000, FRRR has granted out more than **\$100M** to rural, regional and remote Australian communities. Many of these grants have supported communities to respond to the impacts of and build their wellbeing and resilience to drought as well as rapid onset natural disasters.

FRRR sees the greatest returns on investment as being through a blend of:

- Small scale infrastructure grants that improve amenity, catalyse access, equity and quality of life, vibrancy, and attract new people, skills and industry;
- Local capability building through leadership development, resourcing community networks to organise and innovate on new ideas, skills and training development through social enterprise and school/community partnerships, and building the capacity and capability of local non-profits and community groups to be high performing organisations serving their community's needs; and
- Supporting communities to respond to medium to long-term effects of disruptions such as drought, fire, flood, economic turbulence, or population fluctuations.

**FRRR supports the draft Drought Future Fund criteria, particularly objective three: *enhance the public good by building drought resilience through programs that maintain and improve the wellbeing and social fabric of rural and regional communities.***

It is FRRR's opinion that objective three provides 'keystone' support. Grants made during FRRR's 20 years of operations have demonstrated the vital importance of supporting the wellbeing and social fabric of rural and regional communities. It is this support that underpins the resilience of communities to prepare for, live through, and recover from drought and natural disasters. The following pages outline a range of grants made through FRRR's programs that demonstrate the importance of this support whilst also demonstrating the importance that these are community-led initiatives responding to local context – empowering communities to lead their own change, to 'do' themselves, rather than be 'done to'.

## Examples of community-led approaches to improving wellbeing and social fabric of rural and regional communities

FRRR provides a range of flexible funding opportunities for smaller rural, regional and remote communities across Australia. The following examples highlight the way in which FRRR invests, but more importantly they show the different ways that communities are taking control of their future viability, resilience and wellbeing, with a relatively small amount of funding and capacity building support.

### Example 1: Investing in Rural Community Futures

Investing in Rural Community Futures (IRCF) is a place-based program focused on strengthening the capacity and capability of grassroots not-for-profit organisations in rural, regional and remote New South Wales.

Taking a partnership approach it recognises the fundamental role that local NFP organisations play in building and sustaining the social and economic fabric of their communities and responds to the challenges these groups experience in managing their sustainability and viability, and subsequently the contribution they make to addressing local challenges and opportunities.

Over a period of four years, the IRCF program will offer a toolbox of support including access to grant funding, planning and facilitation support, skill development, and experience sharing. **The aim of the program is to strengthen the capacity, capability and ultimately, effectiveness of the local not-for-profit sector in supporting the vibrancy and wellbeing of their communities.**

The non-profit sector is under immense pressure, especially in communities currently impacted by drought. These organisations are typically volunteer run or have very small staffing and are taking up enhanced roles in supporting their communities through the drought. Organisations such as Landcare, Men’s Sheds, Chambers of Commerce, Agricultural Societies, Neighbourhood Centres, event committees, arts organisations, and sporting groups are responding to complex community needs and needing to work smartly in order to maintain their activities. Fundraising is becoming increasingly burdensome due to decreased local sponsorships and increased competition for funds and for volunteers, particularly where there are ageing populations.

**The IRCF program is focussed specifically on building the capacity of these types of organisations, which will support greater readiness and capacity to step up during times of drought.** In this way, the IRCF program is demonstrative of the importance of the Drought Future Fund’s objective three. By supporting local solutions and using a multi-faceted approach focused on enhancing people, place and prosperity, the Investing in Rural Community Futures program aims to build resilient and vibrant communities.

The program is currently working in Leeton, Nambucca Valley, and Junee and will expand to a further two sites in 2020. An overall IRCF Evaluation Framework has been built to allow reflection and promote adaptive responses, so as we move through the program, we adjust to community need and allow for new solutions to local problems. Examples of initiatives that funding has been provided to is summarised below:

<b>Junee Business &amp; Trades</b>	<b>Junee Community Liaison Officer and a series of presentations</b> Build community resilience and support the development of local community networks by conducting a series of workshops and/or presentations in the Junee Shire, and employing a part-time Community Liaison Officer. This grant will fund the part time salary and on costs for the Community Liaison Officer.	\$37,500
<b>Junee Community Centre</b>	<b>Funding strategy for Junee Community Centre (JCC)</b>	\$21,000

	Support organisational revenue generation and develop organisational capacity by engaging a consultant to develop a fundraising strategy for the Junee Community Centre.	
<b>Leeton Shire Council</b>	<b>Leeton Connect - Connecting the Community</b> To form a Community Hub called Leeton Connect as a central point to share community resources, skills, knowledge and equipment and to engage organisations in consultations and workshops. This project will support a part-time coordinator.	\$60,000
<b>Moree Aged &amp; Disability Services Inc.</b>	<b>Governance and Online Communications</b> Improve organisational capacity by investing in a new website and improving governance documentation by producing a strategic plan.	\$12,000
<b>Moree Family Support Inc.</b>	<b>Building our future</b> Increase organisational capacity by employing a co-ordinator to develop a Learning and Development Plan for Moree Family Support Inc, with a focus on upskilling, succession and staff development opportunities.	\$8,000
<b>Lifetime Connect Inc.</b>	<b>Nambucca Valley (Waluurr Ngambagagundi) - Hand in Hand</b> Build community networks and organisational capacity by bringing together organisations within the Nambucca Valley to identify and affirm shared values and aspirations. This project will engage a number of local consultants to develop a Nambucca Valley Community Map	\$60,000

## Example 2: Disaster Resilient: Future Ready

FRRR believes that communities that are supported to build their capacity will be better able to respond to the impacts of natural disasters, including drought. Communities that are engaged and understand the emergency management system, and the communities' role in this, are better equipped at the time of a disaster.

FRRR and our partners are currently working on a future-focussed program to help communities better prepare for disasters and be more resilient, should they eventuate. This multi-stage approach is using practical and evidence-based methods that can enable communities to adapt and be Disaster Resilient: Future Ready.

Key questions being explored, and solutions co-designed in response, to include:

- What makes a community resilient and adaptive?
- What skills, resources, assets and tools do communities need to be able to respond to disaster impacts and adapt to the changed environments?
- How can communities acquire the necessary capability to ensure they are Disaster Resilient: Future Ready?
- How do they acquire and sustain these?
- What will happen if communities are prepared or resilient, does this foster reliance on emergency services?

Leveraging our experience in community recovery, bridging disaster recovery and preparedness with community development approaches, FRRR is undertaking an applied research project to develop the framework and processes for communities to use to enable disaster resilience.

The program is currently working in the NSW towns of Wee Waa, Ocean Shores, and North Richmond. A Victorian iteration will operate in 2020. Whilst the emphasis is on natural disaster resilience, the program addresses drought resilience as part of the disaster lens. An example of an initiative supported to date is summarised below:

## Wee Waa Rotary and Chamber of Commerce

Through community consultation over the last 18 months, Wee Waa residents identified that building social connectedness and community resilience as well as fostering a deeper connection with the local environment will enable them to better withstand and recover from disasters.

Using a \$40,000 grant from FRRR, the Wee Waa Local Aboriginal Lands Council (WWLALC) will pilot Cultural Trail Tours, beginning in October. WWLALC CEO Robyn Keeffe said that the tours would focus on providing traditional knowledge about the land and country while the creation of an Arts and Cultural Hub plays a vital role strengthening in Wee Waa's social fabric.

"As traditional custodians of the local lands, the Kamilaroi people can share unique insights into the country, helping community members to understand how local environmental factors influence impacts by natural disasters, like drought and flood. The tours will take in the Tulladunna Reserve, a culturally significant site containing a Bora Ring, and Scarred Trees.

"WWLALC has completed restoration at Tulladunna Reserve and manages the land in partnership with Corrective Services, providing meaningful work for their participants instead of being incarcerated. Tulladunna Reserve is also a meeting place for knowledge sharing not only for the Aboriginal Community but for the community at large. We have had a number of events at the site and will continue to do so.

"Partnering with Wee Waa Chamber of Commerce and Rotary to establish the Arts and Cultural Hub encourages local Aboriginal artists to display their art and culture. This brings the local Aboriginal community closer to the wider Wee Waa community and provides important alternative income streams, especially as the current drought has reduced employment opportunities."

The Disaster Resilient: Future Ready program provides an avenue for participating communities to come together to discuss their preparedness, plan and act to support their communities into the future. **It is FRRR's recommendation that the Drought Future Fund consider the importance of providing support for facilitated community conversation, to enable community-led initiatives to be devised, planned, and implemented.**

## Example 3: Strengthening Rural Communities

FRRR's Strengthening Rural Communities program is a national small grants program, with applications accepted all year round. After 16 years of delivery, experience shows us there is important value in providing funding opportunities that are deliberately flexible and responsive.

The program serves a diverse range of needs and priorities by providing grants to local non-profit organisations and community groups across Australia including, but not limited to, those delivering environment, arts, social service and learning projects. From a sector perspective the SRC program allows us to engage with agricultural communities, state and local governments, social enterprises, regional development organisations, and varying peak body entities.

There are two funding tiers; one for grants up to \$10,000 and a second tier of up to \$25,000. Grants are provided for a broad range of projects with the view to ensuring locally led programs and services are best positioned to serve a broad community need. In the most recent funding round, approximately one third of the applications approved were from Indigenous communities and FRRR is currently strategically working through how we can appropriately build relationships to further enhance this cultural engagement.

The Strengthening Rural Communities program has an underlying objective to build resilience and adaptive capacity of rural communities to cope with a range of disruptions including drought, through investing in community infrastructure, initiatives that reduce isolation and improve accessibility of services and programs, and which improve liveability, pride, amenity, and vibrancy of communities.

Small and flexible grant programs like SRC demonstrate the importance of providing a range of fit-for-purpose initiatives that not only enable larger projects, but also support small not-for-profit organisations to make a targeted difference within their community – showing that support like this is accessible and within their reach, building their confidence, and spreading benefit across the country. **It is for this reason that FRRR recommends the Drought Future Fund taskforce consider a broad range of support mechanisms, to enable small and large communities to benefit, small and large organisations to participate, and providing benefit far and wide.**

The initiatives supported deliver a range of outcomes including stronger social capital, more resilient local economies, and improved health and wellbeing. Examples include:

<b>Cobden Technical School</b>	<b>Teen Youth Mental Health First Aid</b> Improve mental health and wellbeing of young people through delivery of mental health first aid training to students at Cobden Technical School.	Cobden	\$1,332
<b>Crossenvale Community Group Incorporated</b>	<b>Healthy Communities Project</b> Improve the health and well-being of disadvantaged community members through the purchase of a catering trailer which will enable distribution of food and hygiene packages, as well as delivery of a range of community engagement events.	Echuca	\$10,000
<b>Rural Health Tasmania Inc.</b>	<b>Where's Your Head @? 2019</b> Strengthen the health and resilience of the Circular Head community through delivery of a day of events aimed at raising awareness of mental health issues and connecting people to each other and appropriate support services.	Smithton	\$6,412
<b>Lameroo Sports Club Incorporated</b>	<b>Kitchen Upgrade</b> Enhance community connectivity and well-being by upgrading the kitchen facilities at a well-used local meeting space.	Lameroo	\$10,000
<b>Sunset Strip Progress Association Inc</b>	<b>Digging the Village Future - An investment in a social business to deliver a diversified income stream</b> Enhance liveability and support economic strength by providing equipment to re-establish Sunset Strip Village.	Sunset Strip	\$6,415
<b>Kendall Men's Shed</b>	<b>Targeting Safety and Health</b> Build organisational capacity and maintain volunteer engagement through the purchase of health and safety equipment.	Kendall	\$2,634
<b>Stick Mob Studio Red Hot Arts Central Australia</b>	<b>Stick Mob Studio - Mentoring</b> Develop Indigenous youth business skills, via intensive mentoring program, culminating in creation of graphic design novels and marketing plans.	Alice Springs	\$9,800
<b>Childers State School</b>	<b>Childers State School Breakfast Club</b> Improve food security and the health and wellbeing of children through the purchase of appliances and equipment, that will support the delivery of a Breakfast Club.	Childers	\$10,000
<b>Violet Town Gallery Museum Inc</b>	<b>Museum Training Project</b> Strengthen community leadership and capacity through the delivery of training to volunteers who run the local museum and gallery.	Violet Town	\$7,300

<b>Red Gum Festival Development Group Incorporated</b>	<b>Cavendish Red Gum Festival</b> Build a vibrant culture and increased awareness of environmental challenges through delivery of a festival rooted in the local landscape.	Cavendish	\$7,993
<b>The Cannery Arts Centre Inc</b>	<b>The Cannery Arts Centre Strategic Plan</b> Build organisational capacity through creation of a three-year strategic business plan and review that will be the blueprint for future growth for The Cannery Arts Centre.	Esperance	\$9,750

## Example 4: Heywire Youth Innovation Grants

Since 2013, FRRR and donor partners have collaborated with ABC Heywire to help young Australians act on innovative ideas for social change. The program puts young people in the driver's seat and empowers them to create and implement solutions to issues which directly affect them.

Funding for specific youth-led projects comes off the back of an annual Heywire Regional Youth Summit. This summit engages rural youth in a national conversation, with participants sharing their own experiences about the issues they face growing up in regional Australia and as a group, collectively decide which issues are most pressing to tackle and how they want to approach these.

Following intensive brainstorming and design processes, young leaders pitch their solutions and a community implementation framework to a panel at Parliament House. These ideas are then offered to any rural, regional or remote community to adopt or adapt with a grant from FRRR.

Retaining and engaging young people is one of the most significant challenges that FRRR hears rural communities grappling with. The Heywire program and Youth Innovation Grants provides a platform to enable young people to co-design solutions and offers a means by which communities can proactively and constructively address challenges for young people and their communities more generally. This is critical when considering the leadership and adaptive conditions required by communities to cope through drought.

**Consequently, FRRR recommends that the Drought Future Fund consider the range of cohorts who are likely to be able to seek support from its initiatives, and ensure the accessibility of initiatives results in support that benefits a broad cross-section of rural and regional communities, including our young people.**

Examples include:

<b>Eurobodalla Youth Committee (Eurobodalla Shire Council)</b>	<b>Back to Bush</b> A tourism campaign focussed on Eurobodalla, increasing youth tourism, stimulating the local economy and training local youth in local tourism and marketing.	Moruya	\$10,000
<b>Alexandrina Council</b>	<b>Ag Boom</b> Agricultural program connecting youth to local farming industries, developing problem solving and practical skills, and inspiring youth to have a holistic view of agricultural employment opportunities.	Strathalbyn	\$9,070
<b>Northern Australia Primary Health Limited</b>	<b>Common Connections</b> Delivery of a two-day youth mental health first aid course for up to 475 senior high school students, cultivating regional champions, to support strong mental health supports amongst peers.	Mackay, Whitsunday, Sarina, Moranbah	\$10,000

<b>The Roman Catholic Trust for the Diocese of Cairns SAM (St Andrews Men)</b>	<b>HOPE</b> Support community resilience and build strong social support networks through a series of events including White Ribbon Day breakfast, Strongman Competition and mental health speakers at four BBQ's.	Redlynch	\$3,560
<b>Eden Community Access Centre</b>	<b>Step Up</b> Build community connectedness and support youth engagement in volunteer opportunities through a 'Step Up' one day community street party featuring local volunteer organisations, video and virtual reality games, bands and activities.	Eden	\$9,262

## Example 5: Tackling Tough Times Together

This program is open year-round and gives drought affected communities across rural, regional and remote Australia the opportunity to access funds that benefit their immediate and long-term needs.

The Tackling Tough Times Together grant program is designed to provide flexible funding to support community-based activities that both help to relieve current drought stressors and symptoms, and most importantly, build capacity and resilience for the future. The program is funded collectively, with support of the Australian Government, businesses, philanthropic organisations and individuals across Australia.

The objectives of the program are to:

1. **Reduce social isolation** by facilitating strong social cohesion and connection;
2. Support and engage the community in **leadership development and skills training**;
3. Support opportunities for **social and educational participation and address disadvantage** caused by the drought, for children and young people;
4. **Reduce volunteer fatigue and build the capacity**, capability and sustainability of local not-for-profit organisations to provide support to their communities, particularly where they are playing an increased role during the drought; and
5. Support **local economic recovery or renewal** through projects that stimulate economic activity and cash-flow within communities.

There are three tiers of grants available:

- 🔥 Up to \$20,000 – Projects to be finalised within 18 months of approval;
- 🔥 Up to \$60,000 – Projects to be finalised within 18 months of approval;
- 🔥 Up to \$150,000 – Applications for this tier are by Expression of Interest, and multi-year projects (up to three years) are welcomed.

Whilst these grants focus on supporting communities in drought, the applications also provide insights into drought preparedness, where communities are looking to build knowledge, skills and experience and improve facilities. They may be seeking additional business and entrepreneurial skills in order to diversify incomes, or installing additional rainwater tanks and solar panels on their community halls to improve the usability of community assets within a changing climate, or seminars on farming practices that may provide advantages through times of limited rainfall.

Examples Include:

<b>Brewarrina Aboriginal Corporation</b>	<p><b>Pulling it all Together</b></p> <p>Strengthen the organisation's capacity, capability and sustainability by employing a Project Coordinator to support the Management Committee of the Brewarrina Aboriginal Cultural Museum Trust to develop several social enterprise opportunities that provide income to ensure ongoing financial sustainability</p>	Brewarrina	\$150,000
<b>Police Citizens Youth Clubs NSW Ltd</b>	<p><b>PCYC Regional Outreach Trailer</b></p> <p>Increase engagement of youth through the purchase of a mobile cinema and trailer to be used at film festivals delivered across multiple communities</p>	Grenfell	\$45,000
<b>Birchip Community Leisure Centre</b>	<p><b>Audio-Visual Upgrade</b></p> <p>Build community resilience through the purchase and installation of a new audio-visual system. The system will include screens, projectors, transmitters, receivers, audio processor, ceiling speakers, amplifiers, microphone and wall-mounted equipment rack to ensure compatibility with modern electronic equipment</p>	Birchip	\$20,000
<b>Longreach SODE P&amp;C Association</b>	<p><b>Longreach School of Distance Education (SODE) Home Tutor Workshop 2020</b></p> <p>Support lifelong learning and education through a three-day home tutoring workshop for parents, tutors, students and staff to strengthens teacher / home educator networks and mentor home educators. It will also allow students to spend time with their peers and work face-to-face with their teachers. The project gives respite to families on drought-affected properties and is a successful proven model that supports isolated remote families</p>	Longreach	\$12,500
<b>Stamford Race Club Incorporated</b>	<p><b>Racing into the Future - Canteen Upgrade</b></p> <p>Increase opportunity for social participation and connection by upgrading the canteen amenities of the Stamford Race Club</p>	Stamford	\$10,000
<b>Franklin Harbour Community Development Group</b>	<p><b>Paint Cowell's Silo</b></p> <p>Link into the Eyre Peninsula Silo Art trail to drive local tourism through enhancing the streetscape with the painting of a mural on the Viterra Cowell Silos</p>	Franklin Harbour	\$14,238
<b>Hovells Creek Landcare Group Incorporated</b>	<p><b>Managing the Dry times – current and future strategies for local Landcarers</b></p>	Hovells Creek	\$19,554

	Improve environmental and economic outcomes for the region through the delivery of six regional educational and networking events.		
<b>GLENRAC Inc</b>	<b>Drought Recovery GLENRAC Style - Glen Innes</b> Build skills, knowledge and confidence of the Glen Innes farming community through a series of 12 workshops focussing on drought management techniques, natural resources and sustainable agriculture.	Glen Innes	\$19,980
<b>Boorowa Community Landcare Group Inc</b>	<b>Celebrate, Regenerate, Tackling Dry Times.</b> Support community engagement and drought resilience through Regenerative Ag' Forum and Landcare activities.	Boorowa	\$17,700

The Tackling Tough Times Together program is currently supporting communities during significantly difficult drought conditions. FRRR's fifteen years working to support communities through these tough times has demonstrated that the needs of community change as they recover. During the height of the challenge, applications typically focus on the immediate and present needs. As time passes, and the physical and social impacts persist, applications seek to address a broader range of underlying concerns whilst also looking towards the future. **It is for this reason that FRRR recommends the Drought Future Fund provides support that is flexible enough to allow modification of the framework as the needs of communities shift over time.**

## Conclusion

Rural communities face geographic and demographic obstacles in responding to and preparing for disasters and climate change risks and FRRR concurs with the Government's current focus to *'develop policies that draw together and make sense of the multiple challenges and opportunities for Australia'*.

The rural and remote communities FRRR exists to serve, are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of increasingly frequent and severe natural disasters and climate extremes and we know these impacts threaten to exacerbate existing social and economic inequalities, and negatively affect the liveability of towns.

FRRR has developed expertise in supporting communities to respond to the impacts of and build their wellbeing and resilience, through a range of different programs and approaches, demonstrated in this submission. We play an important and significant role in resourcing smaller rural and remote communities to improve their community assets and deliver approaches that can both help strengthen organisations to meet current needs, but also support in a way that can take a longer and more sustainable view.

FRRR encourages the Drought Future Fund to ensure that objective three provides keystone support, enabling a wide range of flexible initiatives to respond to grassroots community need that underpin the resilience of our rural and regional communities.

Despite the challenges many of our communities face, it is more important than ever that we look for and support opportunities and forward looking projects and FRRR, with its focus on renewal, believes it plays an important role that engenders a sense of possibility and hope for communities.

We welcome the opportunity to elaborate on this submission and contribute to supporting the design of the Future Fund. For any further information, please contact Natalie Egleton, CEO of FRRR, on 03 5430 2399 or email: [ceo@frrr.org.au](mailto:ceo@frrr.org.au).