



Rebekha Sharkie MP

Federal Member for Mayo



c/o Mr Brent Finlay
Chair
Future Drought Fund Consultative Committee

Dear Committee

SUBMISSION ON THE DROUGHT RESILIENCE FUNDING PLAN FOR THE FUTURE DROUGHT FUND

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on behalf of the communities in the electorate of Mayo which I have been privileged to represent in the Federal Parliament since being first elected 2016.

Although periodic drought has been a permanent feature of the Australian landscape, all indications now point to the both the exacerbation and increased frequency of drought due to climate change. While much of the electorate of Mayo is fortunate to receive above-average rainfall for South Australia, the region still remains vulnerable to drought and drought-like conditions, especially at the eastern end of Kangaroo Island and in areas in the rain shadow of the Mount Lofty Ranges.

While there are so many issues that can be raised in the context of the draft Plan, I have focused on five in particular that I believe are particularly relevant to the Mayo experience.

Regenerative agriculture research

Widespread changes in land use have resulted across the Australian landscape as a result of colonial settlement, and modern agricultural techniques have tended to focus upon either mono-cropping or cropping techniques that limit or degrade natural biodiversity. Regenerative agriculture techniques, pioneered by the people such as Charles Massey, offer encouraging prospects of more resilient agricultural landscapes and more sustainable farming practices, especially over the medium to long-term. I encourage the Government to undertake additional and rigorous research to these techniques, including research into how these techniques should be adapted to different and changing Australian biomes.

Agricultural technical extension

As a complement to an expanded research program, agricultural technical extension programs are a tried and tested way of bringing a new wave of research for a changing climate to the next generation of Australian farmers.

Conservation action planning

Agricultural production relies strongly upon services provided by the environment, including pollination services, waterway stabilisation and nutrient retention from trees and foliage, habitat for predators of pests, and the like. To safeguard and build environmental resilience, I encourage the Government to adopt greater use of Conservation Action Planning (CAP).

An underpinning goal of CAP is to move conservation projects from the site scale (tens or hundreds of hectares) to the conservation and preservation of functional landscapes (hundreds of thousands of hectares) which are able to sustain biodiversity at an eco-regional scale. The purpose of CAP itself is thus twofold: to assist sustainable primary production; and to conserve environmental assets at a broad scale.

CAP projects are being successfully implemented on the Eyre Peninsula ('WildEyre'), South-Western Western Australia ('Gondwana Link'), and elsewhere in Australia. An opportunity that is particularly to Mayo, is the possibility of a Fleurieu Peninsula CAP that could be anchored by the Deep Creek, Talisker, and Newland Head Conservation Parks on the southern end of the Peninsula, and extend as far as Cox Scrub, Finniss, Mount Magnificent, and Kyeema Conservation Parks to the north east.

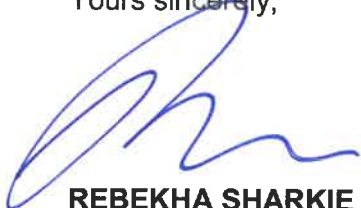
Community Environmental Organisations

Local community environmental organisations have great potential to be a cost-effective funding vehicle to rebuild and enhance agricultural and environmental resilience. These organisations are cost-effective at delivering a wide range of less complex environmental activities because they leverage free and passionate volunteer labour, and they have the added benefit of empowering local communities. However, such organisations require at least a small modicum of recurrent funding so as to maintain their technical and scalable capacity over time.

The Government might also like to consider whether private landholders could be directly incentivised to undertake environmental activities that directly build the environmental resilience that provides the environmental services that in turn improve and build resilience into agricultural production.

Thank you again for the opportunity to draw these themes to the Committee's attention.

Yours sincerely,



REBEKHA SHARKIE MP
Federal Member for Mayo

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