

December 2019

The Future Drought Fund Consultative Committee

RE: Vic Catchments response to the draft Drought Resilience Funding Plan.

Vic Catchments is a collaboration of the 10 Catchment Management Authorities in Victoria. We thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Drought Resilience Funding Plan and congratulate the Australian Government on this positive initiative.

This year many farmers and regional communities in Victoria have experienced tough conditions. Many regions have experienced well below average rainfall for several years. This is a reminder that drought always play a part in our communities. While our farmers and regional communities are recognised for their ability to plan for and adapt to dry conditions there is only so much they can do alone. This initiative provides an opportunity for regions to build substantial community resilience in the face of drought and we would like to provide our support.

In 2016 Australian NRM groups, including Victorian CMAs, developed Natural Resource Management (NRM) Plans for Climate Change, funded by the Australian Government's Planning for Climate Change in NRM Stream 2. In Victoria these plans complement Regional Catchment Strategies and Regional Waterway Strategies to form our regional NRM planning framework. Amongst other things, these plans identify priority actions that build resilience to drought at a regional scale and across regional boundaries. These frameworks have a strong social licence, developed in collaboration with regional stakeholders and community. They offer a strong starting point for regions to identify potential projects under the Drought Resilience Funding Plan. We suggest, that like the approach used for the Emission Reduction Fund, that projects should be formally supported by the NRM groups as consistent with NRM Plans to be eligible for funding. This will allow for a more strategic and targeted approach. There may also be options through your funding plan to provide funding to NRM groups to maintain their NRM plans to continually improve regional drought resilience priority actions.

Victorian CMAs have been identified by the Australian Government as the preferred supplier for the National Landcare Program Phase Two. There would be significant efficiencies to the Australian Government if the Future Drought Fund was delivered, in part, through this mechanism as an additional work order. Our regional presence and track record mean we can deliver on ground projects efficiently through our regional delivery model which includes community and Aboriginal partnerships. Our robust governance frameworks mean the Australian Government can trust that we will deliver their investments appropriately and transparently.



VIC CATCHMENTS

A Collaboration of CMAs

Victorian CMA's are already a significant delivery agent of the draft plans *Strategic Priority: Environmental Resilience for sustainable farming*. For over 20 years, Victorian CMAs have positively influenced the development of sustainable agricultural farming systems. Our unique skill set offers expertise in:

- Soil health.
- Sustainable land management practices
- Farming systems.
- Landscape monitoring
- Community engagement and facilitation.

Every year we plan for and deliver projects that improve land resilience such as improving soil productivity, controlling pests and weeds, developing stock containment, improving ground cover, preventing erosion and protecting native vegetation and wildlife. We do this using an integrated catchment management approach which delivers multiple benefits while preventing perverse outcomes. This approach achieves on average a \$5 community/farmer contribution for every \$1 of government investment. We have the capability and delivery mechanism to do more with Australian Government support.

Once again congratulations on this progressive initiative and thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft plan. Should you wish to discuss our response in more detail please contact me on 0407840514 or executiveofficer@viccatchments.com.au.

Yours sincerely

Tony Baker

EXECUTIVE OFFICER