

WIMMERA CMA RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT DROUGHT RESILIENCE FUNDING PLAN.

Wimmera CMA is the leading NRM organisation in the Wimmera region of Western Victoria. We work in partnership with the Wimmera community and a range of organisations and stakeholders to protect and enhance the condition of the region's natural resources. The prime responsibilities of Wimmera CMA are the health of land and water in the catchment region and promoting sustainable and productive land use practices. This is achieved through local programs that identify and address improvements in the region's natural assets. We thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Drought Resilience Funding Plan and welcome this positive and proactive initiative by the Australian Government. Wimmera CMA's vision is for a healthy Wimmera catchment where a resilient landscape supports a sustainable and profitable community. This aligns well to the objectives of the Drought Resilience Funding Plan.

Whilst not officially in drought, the Wimmera has again experienced well below average rainfall for this year's growing season. In recent decades our farmers have adapted their practices to be able to grow good crops in lower rainfall but there is more they want to do to build resilience into their farming systems. This initiative provides an opportunity for regions to build substantial community resilience in the face of drought. Wimmera CMA would like to offer our support in making this happen.

In 2016 Wimmera CMA, developed Natural Resource Management (NRM) Plans for Climate Change, funded by the Australian Government's Planning for Climate Change in NRM Stream 2. This has complemented our Regional Catchment Strategy and Regional Waterway Strategy to form our regional NRM planning framework. These plans identify priority actions that build resilience to drought at a regional scale and across regional boundaries that are relevant to the Drought Resilience Funding Plan, including:

- Maintain research and development of plant breeding to cope with drought.
- Increase farm trials and research to test and demonstrate farm practices that allow farmers to adapt their practices to cope with climate extremes.
- Farm planning
- Improved access to high quality weather seasonal forecasting.
- Increased engagement with Agribusiness.
- Developing and disseminating best practice information to landholders.

Our NRM planning framework was developed in collaboration with regional stakeholders and community, so has a very strong social licence to operate. There may also be opportunities through the funding plan to provide funding to Wimmera CMA and other NRM groups to continually improve our NRM plans to develop regional drought resilience priority actions.

Our NRM planning framework is a starting point for regions to identify potential projects under the Drought Resilience Funding Plan. We suggest, that it would be prudent to require projects to be formally supported by the Wimmera CMA where they occur in the Wimmera so they are consistent with NRM Plans before they are eligible for funding. This would be particularly important for *Strategic Priority: Environmental Resilience for sustainable farming landscapes*. This would ensure projects are strategic, targeted and consistent with the community's aspirations.

Wimmera CMA have been identified by the Australian Government as the preferred supplier for the National Landcare Program Phase Two. There could be efficiencies to the Australian Government if the Future Drought Fund was delivered, in part, through Wimmera CMA in our region via 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 framework mean the Australian Government can trust that we will deliver their investments appropriately and transparently.

The Wimmera community are a significant delivery agent of the draft plans *Strategic Priority: Environmental Resilience for sustainable farming landscapes*. Wimmera CMA and our community plan for and deliver projects every year that improve land resilience for example:

- soil productivity,
- controlling pests and weeds,
- developing stock containment,
- improving ground cover,
- preventing erosion and
- protecting native vegetation and wildlife.

Using an integrated catchment management approach these activities deliver multiple benefits while preventing perverse outcomes. We have the capability and delivery mechanism to do more with Australian Government support.

Once again 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 0408 459 930 or brennand@wcma.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

DAVID BRENNAN
CEO

