

13 December 2019

Future Drought Fund Consultative Committee

Re: Public submission on the *Drought Resilience Funding Plan 2020-2024*

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the consultation draft of the *Drought Resilience Funding Plan 2020 to 2024* (the Plan). We also appreciated the opportunity to engage in the public consultation session that held in Hobart on 3 December 2019.

The Southern Natural Resource Management Association Inc. (trading as NRM South) is a not-for-profit organisation undertaking natural resource management in the southern Tasmanian region. NRM South is one of three natural resource management associations in Tasmania and works closely with our counterparts; NRM North and Cradle Coast NRM.

As an approved Service Provider to the Australian government, NRM South has demonstrated we have the capacity to design and implement agricultural projects. NRM South is ideally placed to support the delivery of the Future Drought Fund as we have extensive networks with key agriculture stakeholders including state government, local government, industry and farmer networks.

NRM South strongly supports the Plan including the funding principles, vision, aim, strategic priorities and objectives. The focus of building resilience within agriculture and regional communities to adapt to a more drought-prone environment to be critical to our stakeholders many of which are currently in drought and/or have voiced concerns about future droughts.

NRM South would like to suggest the following recommendations:

- Building resilience within agriculture and communities by facilitating behavioural and practice change is a timely process. We recommend that projects need to be longer-term, multi-year projects with an adaptive management approach to ensure they continue to be relevant to the community and effective in achieving the outcomes of the projects.
- We believe projects should employ a co-design approach. Community-led projects with collaborations across industry, farmer/producer groups, agribusiness, industry and natural resource organisations create networks which build the capacity of the community to work together on drought resilience initiatives. Co-design approaches have the benefit that community

tend to feel more ownership over the project, are more engaged, and hence more likely to continue the legacy of the project.

- We recommend that research funding needs to address high priority gaps in knowledge and take into consideration: (i) on-ground activities to demonstrate initiatives/practices tailored to the local environmental conditions and needs of community; (ii) cost-effectiveness and practicalities of implementing the initiatives/practices; (iii) identifying and addressing barriers to adoption of changed practices; (iv) extension activities; and (v) support for communities of practice.
- Whilst the funding principles state that the fund will not provide in-drought assistance, we suggest special consideration is given to communities currently affected by drought and for which drought conditions are predicted to become the new norm. Incentive approaches may be one approach for communities that are already severely impacted by drought and hence have less resources and capacity to trial new approaches and practices.
- Whilst funding is limited to drought, we suggest that other impacts due to climate change such as changes in frequency and severity of extreme weather events and seasonality of rainfall events should also be considered in building resilience of agriculture and communities.

Whilst NRM South is in the early stages of investigating appropriate collaborations and potential projects that would meet the targets of the Future Drought Fund, our early discussions have highlighted several areas that we are ideally placed to support. These include:

- Delivery of property (farm) planning to provide landholders with information and resources to make complex decisions based on climate forecasts, market changes, financial position, business goals aimed at improving their resilience whilst maintaining their natural and agricultural assets.
- Delivery of programs to address weeds and feral animals and their impacts on the ability of landholders to manage drought conditions and recovery pre- and post-drought.
- Facilitation of incentives (including grants) to farmers using transparent processes and reporting.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the consultation draft of the Plan. I look forward to hearing further details about the Plan.

Yours sincerely,



Nepelle Crane

Chief Executive Officer