

03/03/2023

Future Drought Fund Inquiry
Productivity Commission
Future.drought.fund@pc.gov.au

Dear Commissioners,

RE: Future Drought Fund Inquiry

Vic Catchments is an unincorporated collaboration of Victoria's Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) and Melbourne Water (MW). Our purpose is to promote and advocate for integrated catchment management (ICM). ICM adopts a whole-of-system approach for community, land, water, biodiversity planning and delivery for multiple outcomes within and across natural ecosystems. It captures the values and priorities of regional communities and brings together partners from across a region to identify and respond to challenges that cannot be solved by one organisation or stakeholder alone.

In making our submission we acknowledge and support the submission made by NRM Regions Australia who represent Victoria's CMAs and Melbourne Water as part of the broader collective of 54 Natural Resource Management organisations across Australia.

Victoria's CMAs have in general had a positive experience of the Future Drought Fund. The vision, aim, strategic priorities, and objectives of the Funding Plan seem sound. The feedback we have received is that the grants programs have been well run and managed. We acknowledge that it is early days and ongoing monitoring will be required to assess the effectiveness of the plan.

NRM Plans, developed by our CMAs in collaboration with regional stakeholders, community groups, and First Nations People, articulate regional communities' priorities for ICM, including drought impacts. The FDF program could be strengthened by linking to NRM plans. For example, Regional Drought Plans and/or grant applications could link to NRM Plans and supporting regional action plans. This would build a stronger social license to operate, remove potential perverse outcomes and build opportunities to leverage multiple benefits.

Based on feedback, an area for improvement is the Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs. CMAs were key contributors to the design of the Victorian Hub. Despite the networking opportunities that the Hub offered there appears to be challenges with implementation and integration regionally. We are keen to explore opportunities for improvement.

We thank the Commission for the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry. Should you wish to discuss our submission please contact me

Your sincerely

Tony Baker
Executive Officer
VIC CATCHMENTS