



c/o Mr Brent Finlay
Chair
Consultative Committee
Future Drought Fund
Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
CANBERRA, ACT 2601
By email: droughtresilience@agriculture.gov.au

24 December 2021

Dear Future Drought Fund Consultative Committee,

RE: Submission regarding Annual Report 2020-21 and the progress of the Future Drought Fund

The Australian Land Conservation Alliance (ALCA) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Federal Government's consultation on the Future Drought Fund Annual Report 2020-21 and the progress of the Fund.

ALCA's submission is focused on the **future of the Fund's progress**.

Please note that ALCA is happy for this submission to be published in full.

About the Australian Land Conservation Alliance

ALCA represents Australia's leading land restoration and conservation organisations working with landholders on privately owned and managed land across Australia. Together, ALCA's members represent a substantial and growing voice in Australia's land management sector. Our eleven members are:

- Australian Wildlife Conservancy
- Biodiversity Conservation Trust NSW
- Bush Heritage Australia
- Greening Australia
- Landcare Australia
- Nature Foundation
- Queensland Trust for Nature
- South Endeavour Trust
- Tasmanian Land Conservancy
- The Nature Conservancy Australia
- Trust for Nature (Victoria)

ALCA land conservation efforts stretch across over 3 million square kilometres with more than 3000 landholders. We have over 50,000 supporters and our combined annual turnover exceeds \$200 million. Together we work to support some of the most pressing conservation issues across the country – including restoring endangered ecosystems, building the protected area estate, and using natural solutions to tackle climate change.

ALCA engages with large numbers of landholders who retain and enhance habitat for resilience – including resilience to drought and other natural disasters – routinely offering advice, support, and resources to these landowners.

Recommendations

ALCA's submission is focused on the **future of the Fund's progress**, organised by relevant Fund priorities and themes.

Strategic priority: Environmental resilience

1. The Fund's second strategic priority, "*Environmental resilience for sustainable and improved functioning of farming landscapes*" currently receives insufficient priority compared to the Fund's other strategic priorities. A level and sustained focus on environmental resilience can be achieved by making it an integral component of all Fund activities (sometimes known as 'mainstreaming').

Theme: Harnessing innovation

2. Just as a sustainable environment is critical to sustainable agriculture, sustainable agricultural practices are critical to ensuring environmental resilience. ALCA and its members are well placed to enhance and supplement existing programs of land management, restoration and monitoring so as to support innovation and extension.
3. While seeking access to more advanced technology will remain important, Agricultural extension activity should equally be prioritized and effectively resourced as agricultural practice can be limited more by adoption than access to technology.
4. Improved resourcing for data management and evaluation offers significant opportunities for improving land management for environmental resilience; ALCA members and associated landholders are valuable potential partners in this regard.

Theme: Better climate information

5. Early predictions of La Nina seasons are exceptionally helpful for planning environmental resilience activities at scale, for example, landscape-level revegetation.

Theme: More resilient communities

6. Environmental resilience activities offer a strong opportunity for driving shared community purpose, community cohesion, and social resilience, as well as contributing to the agricultural and economic resilience of the landscape. ALCA supports further investments into the building of networks and capacity building, including leadership and ALCA and its members can be a key delivery partner to the private land sector. This will become increasingly important with greater need for private landholders to engage in environmental stewardship, management and protection.

Theme: Better land management

7. Activities that sustain for environmental resilience at the landscape level should be given priority where the impacts of drought lead to widespread land use change; for example, where dryland cropping is no longer viable, and the land is converted into rangelands.
8. Greater priority needs to be placed upon education and awareness of the economic benefits from protecting remnant native vegetation, as well as actions that can improve degraded native vegetation such as revegetation, fencing waterways, and linking isolated patches.
9. A particular focus should be placed upon protecting and enhancing drought refuges, including by building up buffer areas and linking them up across the landscape.



Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Federal Government's Future Drought Fund Annual Report 2020-21 and the progress of the Fund.

ALCA looks forward to an ongoing engagement with Government to improve the quality and resilience of environmental outcomes across privately managed lands.

Australian Land Conservation Alliance