



**Regional
Development**
Australia
CENTRAL WEST

Future Drought Fund
Productivity Commission
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Dear Commissioner,

Re: Productivity Commission Future Drought Fund Inquiry into Part 3 of the *Future Drought Fund Act 2019*

Regional Development Australia Central West is pleased to provide the attached submission in relation to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Part 3 of the Future Drought Fund Act 2019.

We trust that our feedback will be of assistance to the Commission and would welcome any further opportunities for input to the inquiry.

Yours faithfully,

Wayne Sunderland
Director
Regional Development Central West
encl.



An Australian Government Initiative

Productivity Commission Future Drought Fund Inquiry into Part 3 of the *Future Drought Fund Act 2019* – Submission from RDA Central West

Background and Introduction

Regional Development Australia Central West (RDA Central West) is a not-for-profit organisation, funded by the Commonwealth Government. RDA Central West is responsible for the economic development and long-term sustainability of the NSW Central West region.

Approximately 181,000 people live in the region, which comprises the local government areas of Lithgow, Oberon, Bathurst, Blayney, Orange, Cabonne, Cowra, Parkes, Forbes, Weddin and Lachlan.

Long term the Central West has been in and out of drought numerous times. We believe the Drought Fund is vitally important for the sustainability of the region and industry.

Farming in the Central West is predominantly livestock, dairy, cropping, wool and viticulture. All of whom have differing watering needs.

Terms of Reference

In response to the terms of reference for the inquiry drought is a fact of life for the Central West and farmers are learning to adapt to this changing climate and landscape. The Vision, Aim, Strategic Priorities and Objectives outlined in the plan are even more relevant today with the unprecedented weather events and conditions which affect regional NSW.

Of particular relevance are the Drought Hubs which allow the start of a conversation over drought and its impact throughout the community. They provide a platform for farmers to talk about issues and to learn and share knowledge. It allows industry to talk about improvements and changes to current practices. This is of benefit to the whole region as we move forward to more sustainable and cost effective practices. The other advantage is that it allows local solutions to local problems as often one size does not necessarily fit all, however the sharing of knowledge between the regions can help towards a viable solution.

It should be noted that there is minimal funding from other areas of government in this area and if there is it is often a band aid or short term solution. The issue of drought is a nationwide problem and is something that needs to be addressed at national level and

Australia is experiencing extremes in the weather patterns and systems. As conditions change, our farmers will have to adapt to this new environment. The Future Drought Fund should support this area, retain its focus on the agricultural industry, the advances already made and not dilute the current vision and aims of the program. By having too broad a scope, nothing tangible will be achieved.

RDA Central West supports the inclusion of Indigenous organisations in this program as we are seeing evidence of the benefits of their practices in many areas.

While this is a review after four years of the program it is in RDA Central West's opinion this should be supported in the long term as drought is a constant feature and the more information and knowledge that is shared can only benefit the region.

Programs come and go; however, the issue of drought is always around the corner. The hubs are a great initiative to convey information and support the community.