

Future Drought Fund
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
droughtresilience@aff.gov.au.

Submission to Consultation on Future Drought Fund 2024-2028

Murrindindi Shire Council welcomes this opportunity to provide comment for consultation regarding the investment in FDF Drought Resilience Funding Plan (FDF) 2024-2028.

Please see attached council's submission.

For further information, please contact the Coordinator Environmental Programs [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] or email customer@murrindindi.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Consultation to Inform Planning and investment for the Future Drought Fund 2024-2028 Response from Murrindindi Shire Council

Introduction

Murrindindi Shire Council welcomes this opportunity to provide comment for consultation regarding the investment in FDF Drought Resilience Funding Plan (FDF) 2024-2028.

Murrindindi Shire Council supports the broad and connected approach to drought resilience to adapt, reorganise or transform in response to changing temperature and climate, for improved economic, environmental, and social wellbeing. To achieve this the emphasis must be on collaboration in place based projects for broad community benefit.

The FDF has provided significant assistance since its commencement in 2020, including development of Regional Drought Resilience Plans. The Regional Drought Resilience Plans are a crucial foundation for ongoing investment.

The [Goulburn Drought Resilience Plan](#) (GDRP) was released in October 2023, with development by a local reference group and stakeholders, led by Victorian Department of Agriculture. The stakeholders involved, included:

- Farmer representatives
- Industry groups
- Water, health, education, and financial sectors
- Local, state and Commonwealth government agencies (including Murrindindi Shire Council)

As a place-based plan with significant local contribution to identify key priorities, it is essential that the GDRP is seen to be implemented, and not just 'sit on the shelf'. Funding support for implementation of the GDRP will foster ongoing collaboration and local investment.

Submission

1. It is critical that the actions of the GDRP are funded and supported. Base funding should be provided in 2024 to 2028 to achieve key priorities, **separate from competitive funding rounds**.
2. In the next four years, ongoing funds are needed for a GDRP coordination group, including dedicated officers within the region to examine, plan and manage implementation of these opportunities. This group will need to establish ongoing engagement with the many stakeholders in the community/industry, Traditional Owners and local and state government.
3. The highest priority is needed for programs that support resilience of farming and associated businesses. These sectors underpin the economic health and social structure of rural communities. In the GDRP these actions are in Theme 3 'Farm and Other Businesses'.

Drought relief efforts, while necessary, can be costly and may not always incentivise preparedness for future droughts. To ensure the effectiveness of such initiatives, it's crucial that any drought relief is contingent upon evidence of proactive and best

practices by farmers. This approach aligns with the broader, interconnected strategy for drought resilience, aiming to adapt, reorganise, or transform in response to shifting temperatures and climate conditions. The goal is to enhance economic, environmental, and social well-being through collaborative, place-based projects that benefit the wider community. A comprehensive approach emphasises the importance of not just providing relief but also fostering long-term drought resilience and preparedness.

4. To achieve the actions in GDRP Theme 3, several actions within Theme 2 'Coordination, connectivity and knowledge' also need to be funded. These include:
 - Support/secure digital access to key information that enables community to better understand, and provide easier access to, drought and broader business resilience information on business and the region (Including solving telecommunications hotspots).
 - Build the awareness and skills of community about drought preparedness. This action needs to be place-based as the program needs to collaborate with and build trusted and effective networks for this information to be effective.
5. The themes of the GDRP are interlinked. For example, success in theme 3 also depends on the wellbeing of farm and business workers and families, included in action 1.1.1 "health and wellbeing services to be provided at both individual and community levels before, during and post drought". Many actions also need infrastructure investment highlighted in GDRP Theme 5.
6. As noted in the plan, ongoing funding is needed for a regional GDRP coordination group to identify the pathway and timelines to deliver of the Plan to achieve its outcomes. A base level of funding is also needed to fund place-based projects so the community can see the progress of the GDRP.