

Submission

PO Box 322
Launceston Tas 7250
PH: 1300 88 3276
E: Admin@ruralbusiness Tasmania.org.au
W: ruralbusiness Tasmania.org.au

Rural Business Tasmania

*Supporting and Growing
Rural and Regional Enterprise*



ABN 43 790 148 538

Feedback on the Future Drought Fund Draft Drought Resilience
Funding Plan and Investment Strategy 2024 to 2028

1. Who We are.

Established in 1986, Rural Business Tasmania Inc. is a not-for-profit association that primarily offers financial counselling and business support expertise to rural and regional communities.

Rural Business Tasmania's key objective is to help rural and regional families, businesses, and the community manage the ever evolving demands and challenges facing the sector. Rural Business Tasmania has assisted many hundreds of Tasmanians to find pathways to sustainable futures. It has extensive networks that connect quickly and deeply into rural and regional communities. Our services help clients to gain a better understanding of their financial position and identify financial and business risk and opportunities. We assist clients to negotiate with lenders and creditors where necessary and refer to specialist service providers including accountants, family mediation, health and well-being counsellors.

Vision

A sustainable and prosperous future for rural and regional Tasmania.

Mission

To develop and deliver services and projects within the rural and small business sector to foster viable resilient and sustainable development for Tasmanians.

2. Feedback

Opening remarks

Rural Business Tasmania welcomes the review of draft Funding Plan and Investment Strategy 2024 – 2028 and opportunity to comment. We are very supportive of the concept and initial term of implementation and believe that the approach taken has been positive. We have been involved in a number of programs and initiatives that resulted from the current strategy and believe the commitment and frameworks in the current drafts for the coming 4 years broadly incorporate the needs to address drought resilience.

Response to consultation questions

The documents show an appropriate framework for use of funds going forward and the recognition of both drought and climate resilience requirements. We believe that collaboration and long-term objectives that practically support the local communities targeted should be a focus to ensure that a coordinated approach is undertaken. The use of the Hub structure in co-ordination of initiatives should be further supported in the coming years to gain a cohesive, effective and efficient use of funds whilst providing real on ground results.

Longer term programs will assist in ensuring full implementation and effectiveness of programs and appropriate funding streams to enable smaller organisations to participate without significant volunteer or competing investment. This may include more coherent communication of needs, longer lead time and recognition of investment by partners of initial work undertaken. Similar to the goals of the Future Drought Fund to build resilience, adequate support to build the resilience of organisations rather than front loading and high expectations to co-fund and contribute needs recognition.

Utilising existing networks and structures remains important and this should be at the forefront of programs retained going forward. We need a variety of programs that address all aspects of resilience. Reduction of the number of programs and consolidation of funding may address concerns associated with administrative burden and ensure on ground effectiveness is a priority. Similarly ensuring that less steps to delivery and timing considerations (i.e. understanding local peak periods for target audience such as harvest) are built into program logic.

Utilising existing and consistent local (either region or state based) and connected organisations together with existing Hub partners is paramount in building on the work already done. Local solutions will be most effective as it meets the relative needs of a diverse industry and community.

Adjustments to provide stronger outcomes should be encouraged but wholesale change should be avoided. The traction in program effectiveness that is now starting to excel can be enhanced through long term objectives and funding that provides a significant remit and sees fundamental change to build resilience to climatic fluctuations.

There are many resources and tools that have been developed in the initial stages of rollout and the current priority should ensure implementation and on ground usefulness. These outputs required face to face, hard copy components to address digital access, literacy and numeracy barriers.

As change and adaptation continue to build in significance into the future, innovation will be crucial. With innovation there will be needs to experiment, test, tweak and adjust. Similar to the work of our rural financial counsellors, where long term engagement (in the terms of RFCS through case management processes) and gradual change and actions are put in place the long-term results are transformative. Long term the aim should not be just change but a continued appetite and understanding of adaptation as a continuing part of all actions taken. To be effective, this adaptative ethos should reside in all components of the farming business, community, region and associated industries.

Summary

There are three key areas that will generate success in the long term for the investment of public funds to build resilience for drought and climatic fluctuations. These are:

- Valuing and enabling local existing networks, pathways and organisations, together with supporting co-ordination of these through the Hub structure.
- Consolidating and implementing initial successes of programs to build longer term sustainable practices.
- Resourcing and supporting innovative ideas with opportunities to test and tweak and building sustainable communities and the local organisations they rely on and who contribute significantly and require funding commensurate with the expectations of their outcomes.