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To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to inform the next phase of funding from 2024 to 2028 for the Futures Drought Fund. This submission has been prepared after review of the draft Funding Plan and the consultation draft Investment Strategy. It is presented in the table below, responding to the list of discussion questions. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or would like further information.

Section	Question
5.0 Proposed Key Features of New Programs	Does the draft funding plan provide an appropriate framework to guide spending on drought resilience initiatives?
Yes, it provides a solid framework. The concepts of collaboration and innovation could be elevated within the framework as these are key to seeing funds allocated in ways that will maximise benefits to farmers and producer groups and communities. Ensuring a focus on new, innovative practices that bring organisations together to collaborate on solutions is critical, funding of outdated practices, entrenched in traditional research will be unlikely to drive the type, rate and scale of change required.	
5.0 Proposed Key Features of New Programs	Which current FDF programs should be retained?
Programs that promote a holistic view of climate resilience.	
5.0 Proposed Key Features of New Programs	Which current FDF programs could be integrated with existing programs or built upon to drive efficiency or to maximise impact?
6.1 Place-based Action and Partnerships	How should the Hubs' role be better defined to deliver more impact for their regions? Are the proposed funding options for the Hubs appropriate?
Hubs should both support innovation and promote practice change. Communicating stories of success should be a key role of the hubs.	
6.1 Place-based Action and Partnerships	What implementation pathways and governance options are the most appropriate ways of actioning regional plans?
Current governance where only lead organisations (those who have a significant financial contribution to the hubs) are permitted a Board position may lead to reinforcing current views rather than seeing new ways of doing things or leaning into new innovative practice. Perhaps there is a need to ensure Board members have a finite tenure so alternative Board Directors from within lead organisations take a turn.	

Section	Question
	Also there may be a role for a rotating Board member drawn from the collaborators to ensure fresh thinking is delivered into the Board.
6.2 Information, Skills, and Capacity Building	Should a future iteration of the FBR program be more focussed on specific learning areas or target particular cohorts of farmers (e.g., young farmers, remotely located farmers, smaller landholders and/or those operating on marginal land)?
	The FBR provides important resources and learning opportunities to farmers. A focus on prioritising NRM and having it as cross thematic in FBR programs is critical to driving adaptation to climate change and achieving drought resilience.
6.2 Information, Skills, and Capacity Building	How should public and private good be balanced in a future iteration of the FBR program? Should the program require farmer co-contributions?
	This is challenging as it maybe the farmers who are not doing well financially are the ones who need support in changing their practices and so are most in need of the program. A balanced approach is required here, if farmers are supported and doing well and their practices see them managing for landscape health then the region, they are in will do better in terms of climate and drought resilience. Healthy functioning landscapes are required to mitigate and adapt to climate change, every farmer has a role in this.
6.2 Information, Skills, and Capacity Building	Should the FDF provide training on how best to use and interpret information from existing climate tools, including but not limited to 'My Climate View'? If so, who could benefit most from such training?
	As required, those who use this information for decision making will likely need some training.
6.2 Information, Skills, and Capacity Building	Should the long-term goal for CSA be providing adaptation information to better support practice change in response to climate projections?
	Yes.
6.3 Agriculture and Land Management	Should the FDF prioritise natural capital management projects through discrete programs (such as a new Drought Resilience Soils and Landscapes program) or should NRM continue to be embedded throughout most streams of investment? Or both?
	Both. Landscape function, particularly how water is cycled, stored and moves through landscapes is critical to adapting to and mitigating the impacts of drought and climate change. We need multiple pathways for farmers to learn how to rehydrate their landscapes and reap the benefits in production, biodiversity and climate resilience.
6.3 Agriculture and Land Management	How can First Nations communities be supported so that their knowledge and practices to care for country can maintained for the benefit of their communities and land?
	Consultation with First Nations communities and engaging in processes of knowledge exchange that provide opportunities for culturally appropriate work that contributes to caring for country and closing the gap.

Section	Question
6.4 Innovation and Transformation	Should the FDF focus on innovation, or broader extension and adoption of tried and tested practices to enable change at scale in Australia? Or both?
Both. Care must be taken to consider the role of tried and trusted practices and how they may contribute to the “status quo”. If we are to adapt and become more resilient to climate change impacts and drought, then tried and tested practices may not serve farmers. Some practices like solid financial planning though will always be useful. Supporting innovation will be critical, less tested practices like catchment scale landscape rehydration can lead to dramatic improvements in landscape health but we do not have 20 years of data to back that up. Unless we back innovative practices then we will not achieve the level of transformational change required to meet the challenge of food and water security for Australia in a changing climate.	
6.4 Innovation and Transformation	Should transformational change, and partnerships that facilitate it, be prioritised by the FDF? What incentives or programs would best support transformational change? Or should the FDF continue to also build incremental change – that eventually lead to transformation – and focus on the preconditions (knowledge, skills, and support etc) that enable individuals and communities to make transformational changes?
Transformational change must be supported, we are living with the results of climate change because of past inaction. Accepting that we must be undertaking action research so driving change as part of the projects that are funded must be part of the focus if we are to meet the challenge of climate change the FDF has a role in supporting the significant reforms that must occur particularly around landscape management. We have no time to waste. Every program must be delivering practice change. We need a national program of landscape rehydration at the catchment scale, so we repair the hydrological function of landscapes, then we have reduced the risk from climate change and drought from a landscape perspective. Management changes to reduce synthetic inputs and build natural capital can be further supported and incentivised through appropriate programs. These may include assisting farmers in identifying and accessing suitable natural capital markets.	
6.4 Innovation and Transformation	What Drought Resilience Innovation Challenges could be targeted in the proposed new innovation pilot program?
Challenges that deliver the rehydration and restoration of hydrological landscape function that also deliver a raft of co-benefits including climate resilience, increased productivity, increased biodiversity, improved carbon sequestration into agricultural landscapes. Challenges that clearly identify landscape health and function as what underpins the production of healthy food and fibre.	
6.5 Enabling Activities	What enabling activities are essential to the success of the FDF and should be directly funded to support FDF programs?
Enabling activities that support the sharing of success, short film, science communications etc that help farmers understand actions they can take are an important part of enabling activities.	

Yours sincerely,



The Mulloon Institute