

I attended the DAFF consultation meeting today in Armidale. Thank you for the opportunity to attend, give some ideas and feedback, and now I have some further comments re extension issues for the fund.

As alluded to by Cameron Leckie at the meeting, there is somewhat of a vacuum in ag extension training and thus sufficient personnel to efficiently extend this information collected by the drought fund for timely and efficient use by farmers. Universities and colleges (certainly from my experience with UNE, but I stand corrected) do not prioritise either specific courses for extension or extension modules within existing ag related courses to any great extent. The shortening of semesters at UNE is putting pressure on faculties to deliver content as it is, without adding extra, so there is no quick fix- maybe some change in priorities? Cameron confirmed what I suspected, and if we cannot make best use of all of this info, then in 10 years we will be reinventing the wheel and going through this whole process again. Extension/teaching is a partly inherent skill for some, but can be greatly improved with appropriate training. From my perspective what a key component for extension people, is to be able to share knowledge in a meaningful and accurate way, but then facilitate/assist those farmers to analyse/use that knowledge for their own situations, by formulating/making their own decisions- not just being told what they should do, or given prescriptive solutions. Extension people need to have the skills be able to teach and assist farmers how to use and prioritise information - adaptation skills, not just adoption skills by those farmers.

A quote I saw recently (apparently attributed to Benjamin Franklin) is "Tell me and I forget, Teach me and I remember, Involve me and I will learn." I hope this area of extension will be given some more priority in the 2024 and onwards funding deliberations. I have been involved for a number of years with UNE ag and resource and science related faculties with on farm visits, and this has increased my interest in agricultural education. I hope these comments may be useful, and if others as well as Cameron Leckie and myself raise this key issue, then additional funding or funding priority will be forthcoming.