

FDF feedback – Informing the next stage of 2024-28 planning.

Summary

1. **Improved coordination & collaboration between the Hubs, Nodes RDRP and all FDF streams** and programs between federal, state and shires;
2. **Better integration** of grants programs and the Regional Drought Resilience Plans;
3. **Ensure cohesive policy and program design** before launching programs;
4. **Ensure there is a clear line of communication from regional, state and federal level** to improve communication and ensure funding is targeted on priority projects;
5. **Prioritise funding for the 9 completed RDRP plans.**

1. What should the FDF focus on in 2024-2028?

- **Strong leadership and advocacy** between federal, state and across the regions: methodical, collaborative, inclusive, respectful. Currently many are working 'in glorious isolation!';
- **Clearly defined timelines.** Long drawn-out approval processes reflect poorly on leadership of DAFF, AgVic, CSIRO and ministers. e.g., over 12-15 months from the completion of the RDRP pilots to endorsement and media release is sub optimal. In Victoria it may be 18-24 months before Custodian groups are up and running;
- **Strategic planning to minimise sequencing risks.** Work on improved policy and program design between state and federal jurisdictions. Departments continue to work in silos, with little regard for other stakeholders e.g., Developing the RDRP plans and then looking for someone to implement these afterwards looked poorly organised and a little disingenuous. *This was 'a riddle wrapped in a mystery - inside an enigma'*;
- **Improved coordination & collaboration between the Hubs, Nodes and all FDF streams** and programs between federal, state and shire programs. In some regions Drought Hubs/Nodes were highly engaged in the development of Regional Drought Resilience Plans, while this was not the case in other regions. (The Victorian Hub is focused on academic studies and has little contact with other FDF groups. Many of the Nodes are not engaging with stakeholders. There needs to be increased accountability in where millions of dollars are being spent on these two groups) It is important that those involved in Drought Hubs/Nodes are familiar with and supportive of their regional Plans;
- **Better integration** of the FRRR administered grants programs and the Regional Drought Resilience Plans;
- As per recommendation 7.3 in the report – we need a clearer pathway for implementation of the RDRP.
- **More nuanced stakeholder engagement process** between the Hubs, Nodes, RDRP, FRRR and federal programs to enhance engagement and minimise stakeholder fatigue;
- Identify the right people and organisations to engage with, we lacked industry and commercial representation, which limits the scope of feedback and 'buy in';
- **Continue relationship building:** the quality of the relationships between partners (individuals and organisations) and how well everything is working together to determine the best projects to deliver on the RDRP plans;
- Develop **'real' outcome-oriented reporting**, to keep the community engaged and interested in the actions to build resilience, rather than count the number of people and number of meetings;

- **Focus on strategies and actions** that are clear enough to give direction, while providing enough room to create implementation plans that can be adjusted at the regional/local level based on budget, actors and time;
- Continue to **integrate drought resilience planning** with regional climate adaptation strategies, including bushfires, storms, floods and other emergencies. Drought resilience building is a not a one-off activity, and should not be seen in isolation from other regional risks/concerns;
- **A clear schedule** detailing which funding streams will be available at what time would be really useful in planning the delivery of Regional Drought Resilience Plans,
- The RDRP planning processes undertaken as part of the Better Planning theme should be strongly supported. It would undermine confidence in the FDF and the RDRP processes if the regions were not given **appropriate resources to implement their RDRP**. The plans should be seen as the key drivers for regional investment – these are the documents that capture the region’s strategic priorities. The coordinator of the RDRP should play a central role as the FDF should be very much focussed on delivering on the key regional planning document;
- Develop a **clear investment strategy**;
- Clearer outline/scope of **required outputs**;
- Earlier input from Consultants/Frontier and CSIRO (to provide an evidence base and program logic up front)
- **Clearer outline of ownership and implementation** of the RDRP plans;
- Provide **clear governance arrangements** and **avoid constantly changing expectations** of advisory groups;
- Avoid Commonwealth **micro-managing** ‘community led’ plans;

2. How should the Government identify priorities for future FDF investment?

- **Implement cohesive policy and program design before** launching programs. Continually changing ‘goal posts’ in policy and program implementation leads to sub optimal outcomes;
- State Steering committee is currently ineffective, ensure this group is made up of leaders with a knowledge of what is happening, allowing them to **strategical plan**;
- **Anticipate major issues, adapt as challenges arise, and respond** in a timely manner;
- (Internal feedback) The AgVic rep currently on Hub committee is not a part of the RDRP Project Committee and does not having working insights of the RDRP, it is not clear why this has occurred. The rep should be Michael Bretherton or one of the regional Leaders;
- Ensure that local and **regional priorities are elevated**, and place-based solutions are identified. For example, the ‘Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative’ is well suited to delivering on the social themed actions of Regional Plans;
- Scope & building: To **enhance community ownership** - empower regions to choose how to best spend funding to prepare and deliver on the RDRPs;
- Utilise the Investment Logic Mapping (ILM) exercise which works well for projects and the allocation of funds. There would well work across the various FDF programs.

3. How should funding be allocated in 2024-2028?

- Stop distributing millions of dollars in a chaotic manner, **ensure there is a clear line of communication from regional, state and federal level** so funding is targeting on priority projects;
- **Avoid duplication;**
- **Improve connections** and understanding of future FDF investments, as part of future community consultation and developing the regional plans ensure representative/s from DAFF, FRRR, Hub and Node partners to obtain greater buy-in to the final RDR plans;
- When selecting actions and prioritising resilience building activities, actively **strive to strike the balance between short- and medium-term preparedness and long-term adaptation/ transformation** resilience building activities;
- **Prioritise funding for the 9 completed RDRP plans** to support actions that enhance place based transformational activities aligned to regional and national plans. Most Plans took close to 8-12 months to develop, and a great deal of time and energy was put into their creation. To capitalise on this work and the regional support that exists for them, their implementation should be a priority;
- Focus funding on programs that deliver the greatest combined public and private benefit. The key to this will be an appropriate evaluation process.