



Have Your Say on the consultation draft of the Australian Government Drought Plan

We are inviting stakeholders to provide their feedback on the Australian Government Drought Plan: consultation draft. This feedback will inform the new plan, due to be released in 2024, which will replace the 2019 [Australian Government Drought Response, Resilience and Preparedness Plan](#).

What has informed the draft plan

The draft plan has drawn on previous rounds of stakeholder consultation as well as past drought response reviews and inquiries to which stakeholders have provided input. Most recently, this has included panel discussions and policy workshops at the 2023 National Drought Forum.

The centrepiece of our engagement to inform the draft plan has been the [review of the 2019 Australian Government Drought Response, Resilience and Preparedness Plan](#). The review, released in May 2023, consulted 108 stakeholders from industry, unions, not-for-profit organisations, conservation groups, all levels of government, and key Australian Government drought support networks.

What we heard and how we responded

The review made 18 recommendations. We accepted all of these and have used them to inform and shape the draft plan. The majority of these recommendations have been addressed in the draft plan. The remaining will be implemented over the life of the final plan or are outside the scope of the plan.

What we have done in the draft plan

We want to ensure that we have provided sufficient and clear detail in response to the more complex recommendations of the review; particularly where this detail has been articulated in a new, and more direct way, than the current plan. To do this, questions 1 to 4 are focused on review recommendations 1, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13 and 14. A full list of the review's recommendations and how we are responding to them is available at [Appendix A](#).

Australian Government's drought policy

The review highlighted the need for the Australian Government's drought policy to be more clearly explained. The review recommended that the new plan be developed to act as a guiding document for Australian Government drought policy and programs, and better explain what drought policy aims to achieve across the drought cycle (Recommendations 1 and 6).

The draft plan states the Australian Government's drought policy in the *Forward-looking drought policy* chapter. The 4 pillars of the draft plan demonstrate what that policy means in practice.

Question 1: Is the Australian Government's approach to drought across the drought cycle clear in the draft plan?

Drought response and disaster response

The Australian Government's approach to drought policy has evolved to reflect learnings from past responses. This includes drought no longer being classified as a natural disaster. The review recommended the new plan explain the distinction in government policy between drought and disaster response (Recommendation 7).

The draft plan captures the distinction between Australian Government drought and disaster response in the *Forward-looking drought policy* chapter. Despite the different approaches, the draft plan acknowledges that there are opportunities to promote learning across the two subjects. This is covered in the *Links to other government policy* chapter.

Question 2: Is the draft plan clear as to why the Australian Government's drought policy and response is different to that for natural disasters?

Australian Government support across the drought cycle

The review recommended the new plan emphasise the Australian Government's role and activities to promote preparedness, without losing sight of the importance of in-drought support (Recommendation 10). It also recommended closer consideration of the current and potential approach to drought recovery (Recommendation 11).

Greater clarity about how the Australian Government may intervene, how decisions about additional support are made, and what support the government will not provide was also recommended by the review (Recommendations 13 and 14).

The draft plan provides detail about how the Australian Government will prepare, plan and respond to drought in the *Drought response framework* section of *Pillar 1 – Evidence based decision-making*, and in *Pillar 2 – Strategic drought support*. *Pillar 2* also lists what type of support will not be provided.

Question 3: Does *Pillar 1 – Evidence based decision-making* provide greater clarity about when, why, how and what the government will consider when determining its response to drought?

Question 4: Does *Pillar 2 – Strategic drought support* provide greater clarity about how the Australian Government will respond across the drought cycle, including what support it will not provide?

What we will progress over the life of the final plan

The draft plan will not be set and forget. Throughout the life of the final plan, we will continue to progress and refine our drought policy.

Some recommendations from the review cannot be addressed through providing more detail in the draft plan. They require longer consideration and further consultation to understand the complexities and identify best way forward. Other recommendations identified important work that sits outside the scope of the plan. We are progressing this work alongside the plan.

The summary of the review recommendations and how we are responding at [Appendix A](#) provides further details.

Work underway includes:

- acknowledging the diverse impacts of drought on a wider range of cohorts (Recommendation 3)
- considering how incident management approaches across government can be applied to drought (Recommendation 16)
- options for how to assess and report on the effectiveness of drought policy as a whole (Recommendation 18).

Question 5: Have you identified any gaps in how we have responded to any of the review recommendations in the draft plan?

Question 6: Do you have any comments on the work underway for us to consider as we progress it?

Help shape the next drought plan

This discussion paper has been designed to facilitate feedback on the draft plan. Consultation is focused on how we have addressed the recommendations of the review, and ensuring our messaging is clear in the final plan.

Consultation is open for 6 weeks and we invite you to Have Your Say.

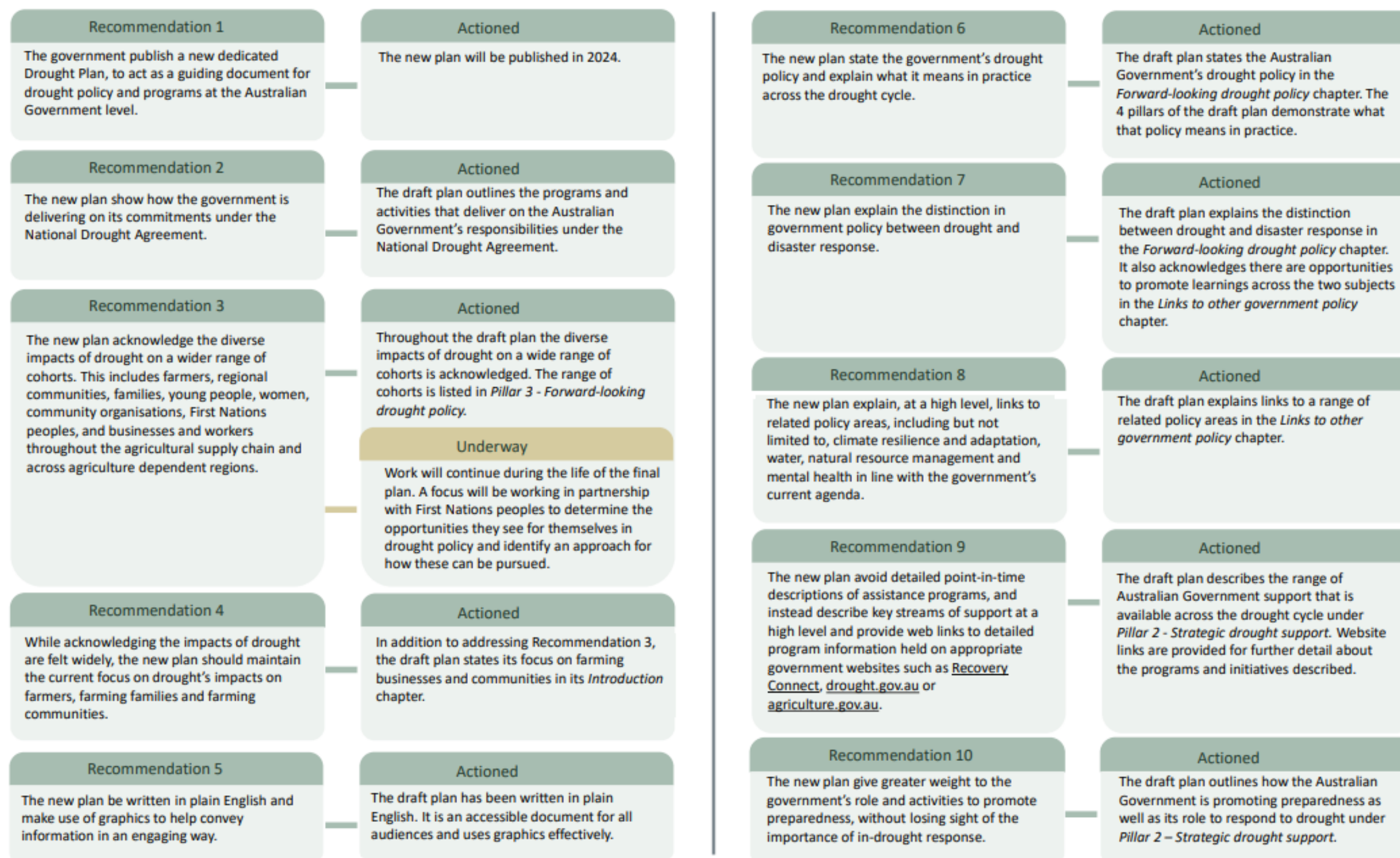
Out of scope

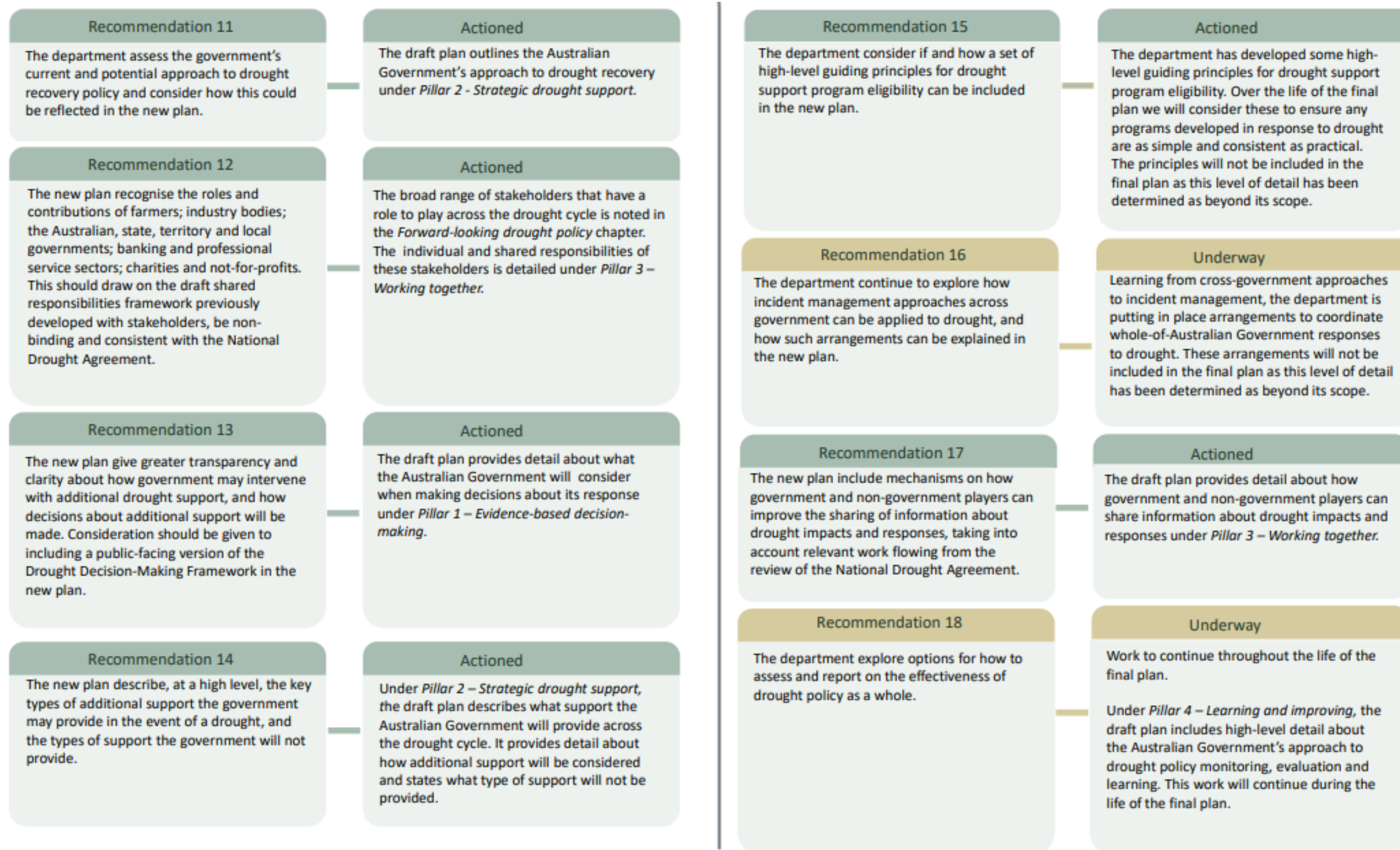
Matters that are considered out of scope for consultation on the draft plan include:

- the National Drought Agreement, which governs the Australian Government's relationship with states and territories on drought issues
- the Future Drought Fund *Drought Resilience Funding Plan 2024 to 2028* that outlines the high-level vision, aim and strategic objectives of the Future Drought Fund
- the Future Drought Fund *Investment Strategy 2024 to 2028* that will provide information about the operation of the Future Drought Fund and proposed priority areas of investment over its 4-year funding cycle
- the content of specific drought programs, including their eligibility, delivery arrangements, governance, and monitoring, evaluation and learning arrangements
- the development of, and science behind, the Australian Agricultural Drought Indicators
- related government policies and consultation.

Appendix A: How the Australian Government Drought Plan consultation draft is implementing recommendations from the review

Figure 1 Each recommendation from the review and its associated progress





Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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