

A National Drought Policy

PREAMBLE

Droughts are part of Australia's landscape and managing drought is a feature of Australian agriculture. Drought is forecast to become more prevalent in future with climate change likely to exacerbate drought conditions¹ and contribute to increased climate volatility and variability that particularly impacts the farming community.

Australian farming businesses and farming communities are adopting increasingly sophisticated and effective strategies to deal with drought and respond to climate change variability. Although Australian agriculture is exposed to significant risk, with climate presenting the most significant production risk², the Australian farm sector has experienced sustained growth suggesting that farm businesses are largely dealing with risk successfully and sustainably.^{3,4,5,6}

Adaptable farm business management has proved the most successful way of mitigating a wide range of risks, including drought. Although self-reliance is the agricultural industry's preferred approach to drought management, prolonged or severe drought can be beyond the ability of otherwise successful farming businesses to manage⁷. In these instances, considered and well targeted government support is vital.

Key:

Text highlighted in yellow is the NFF Drought Policy.

Text highlighted in blue is the National Drought Agreement.

¹ Bureau of Meteorology & CSIRO (2008), *Drought Exceptional Circumstances, An Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on the Nature and Frequency of Exceptional Climate Events*, Melbourne.

² Laurie, A., M. Curtis, R. Heath, L. Darragh, & K. McRobert (2019), *Australian agriculture: an increasingly risky business*, Research Report, Australian Farm Institute, p. 24.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁴ Despite widespread drought in eastern Australia, the gross value of farm production across the country has remained high. ABARES (2019), *Agricultural Commodities: June quarter 2019 – Commodities – data tables*.

⁵ In 2007-08, at the height of the Millennium Drought, 23 per cent of Australia's 143,000 farms received drought assistance. Productivity Commission 2009, *Government Drought Support*, Report No. 46, Final Inquiry Report, Melbourne, p. XX.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. XXI

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. IV.

It is important that policy settings support effective risk management by farmers, agriculture-dependent businesses and rural communities. History has shown that some policies, while well-meaning, have undermined the adoption of effective risk management practices.

This policy prioritises objectives and outcomes that enhance long-term preparedness, sustainability, resilience and risk management for farming businesses and farming communities in Australia in order to minimise the impact of drought. It recognises the essential role of farming businesses as the nation's food and fibre producers, important export revenue earners and stewards of 51 per cent of the Australian land mass.

Drought policy cannot be considered in isolation from broader policies that impact on the ability of farmers and rural communities to build profitable and sustainable farming businesses and, in turn, resilient rural communities and a strong agriculture sector. These include water, natural resource management, taxation, animal welfare, regional development, telecommunications, and climate change policies.

The National Farmers' Federation (NFF) calls on the Federal Government, state and territory governments, and local governments, other agricultural industry bodies, community groups, and agricultural research organisations, to work together to develop and implement a comprehensive, enduring national drought policy.

The need for a comprehensive and national drought policy is evident in:

- The continued hardship suffered by a number of farmers and local communities because of drought despite the regular occurrence of drought in most parts of Australia;
- Significant variation between drought measures introduced in different states and territories, raising questions regarding fairness and the effectiveness of those measures or groupings of measures;
- A lack of certainty and clarity regarding the measures available to farmers and rural communities to help them successfully manage drought;
- A lack of clarity regarding the criteria farmers need to meet, and information they need to provide, to access drought programs;
- Governments continuing to introduce *ad hoc* drought assistance measures during drought⁸ that can undermine drought preparation and resilience measures; and
- The absence of a coordinated approach to drought preparation and management that includes representatives of impacted stakeholders.

The NFF has drafted the following National Drought Policy for the consideration of the Commonwealth Government, state and territory governments, local governments, other agricultural industry bodies, and community groups. It is focused on those measures industry has agreed are needed to support the long-term viability of the Australian agricultural sector. It draws on past government drought policies and reviews, research into effective drought measures, the National Drought Agreement, the NFF Drought Policy, the

⁸ Laurie, A., M. Curtis, R. Heath, L. Darragh, & K. McRobert (2019), *Australian agriculture: an increasingly risky business*, Research Report, Australian Farm Institute, p. 70.

AgForce Agricultural Business Cycle, the review of the Farm Household Allowance and direct input from farmers and people living in rural and regional communities impacted by drought.

The policy details:

- A. Objectives and Outcomes
- B. Roles and Responsibilities of the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments
- C. Roles and Responsibilities of Industry, Farm Businesses, Local Governments, and Community Groups
- D. Commonwealth Government Support Measures
- E. State and Territory Government Support Measures
- F. National Drought Policy Governance
- G. Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting
- H. List of Parties to the National Drought Agreement
- I. List of Signatories to the National Drought Agreement

A. Objectives and Outcomes

The **objectives** of this National Drought Policy (the Policy) are to:

1. enable farmers and rural and regional communities to successfully prepare for, manage through, and recover from drought;
2. support the long term sustainability of the Australian agricultural sector;
3. target preparedness, enhance resilience and therefore reduce the impact of drought on the viability and profitability of Australian agriculture over time. This in turn will reduce dependency on government programs and assistance;
4. achieve a nationally consistent approach to drought policy, underpinned by an intergovernmental agreement that specifies objectives and clearly defines roles and responsibilities for each level of government;
5. establish a framework for jurisdictions to monitor, review and adapt drought programs with industry and local community involvement;
6. maximise farmers' and rural and regional communities' options to manage their risks and facilitate preparedness; provide support during drought events; and enable rapid recovery;
7. reduce confusion among farmers and rural and regional communities about their eligibility for drought assistance;
8. streamline the administrative processes for obtaining government drought support in order to reduce the cost of administering programs and the administrative burden on those seeking to access assistance;
9. deliver relevant complementary education and personal support services; and provide farmers and rural and regional communities with a full suite of risk management tools; and
10. deliver flexible drought programs that ensure all drought impacted farmers, irrespective of the commodity they produce, and rural and regional communities, are able to access drought support;

The **outcomes** this policy seeks to achieve are:

1. Farming businesses have an improved capability to manage business risks and the tools to implement sustainable and resilient risk management practices;
2. Farming businesses, industry services providers, agri-finance, community organisations and local government are partners of government and support rural communities to prepare for, respond to, and recover from drought;
3. Farming businesses, farming families and farming communities are supported in times of hardship and have an increased understanding of, and access to, available support;

4. The roles and responsibilities of National Drought Policy Parties in responding to drought:
 - a. Are clear;
 - b. Support nationally consistent and certain drought policy and drought preparedness, response and recovery programs;
 - c. Reduce gaps and unnecessary duplication; and,
 - d. Improve sharing, and quality, of common sources of data and information across stakeholders to strengthen policy and business decision making.
5. An effective and mandated process for reviewing the National Drought Policy that includes monitoring and evaluation of specific drought programs and measures;
6. A governance structure for implementing, monitoring, reviewing and, where agreed, amending the National Drought Policy that includes representation from industry, rural and regional communities, federal, state and territory, and local governments.

B. Roles and Responsibilities of Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments

To realise the objectives and outcomes in this agreement, government, industry and community groups have specific roles and responsibilities. The roles and responsibilities of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments are outlined below.

Role of the Commonwealth

The Commonwealth is responsible for:

- a. Improving and maintaining national, regional and local predictive and real time drought indicator information, drawing on the Bureau of Meteorology's (BOM) observation network and forecasting;
- b. Providing continued access to incentives that support farming businesses' risk management, including taxation concessions, the Farm Management Deposit Scheme and concessional loans;
- c. Establishing and operating a Future Drought Fund, to enhance drought preparedness and resilience; and
- d. Funding and delivering a time-limited household support payment based on individual and farming family needs, including
 - i. Reciprocal obligations that encourage resilience; and
 - ii. Case management to support reciprocal obligations requirements.⁹

⁹ Listed in different order to that in the National Drought Agreement

Role of the states and territories

Each state or territory is responsible for:

- a. Encouraging the delivery and uptake of capability-building programs to improve farming businesses' skills and decision making that are flexible and tailored to farming businesses' needs.
- b. Ensuring animal welfare and land management issues are managed during drought.

Shared roles and responsibilities of the Commonwealth and state and territory governments

The Commonwealth, states and territories are responsible for:

- a. Developing, designing, implementing and funding drought preparedness, response and recovery programs that are consistent with this Policy, encourage robust risk management and seek to avoid market distortions.
- b. Ensuring programs and assessment for eligibility for programs are streamlined to remove red tape and deliver timely assistance to farming businesses, farming families and impacted local communities.¹⁰
- c. Ensuring information on assistance for drought preparedness, response and recovery is accessible and readily available.
- d. Developing capability-building programs, tools and technologies to inform and improve farming businesses' decision-making and promote resilience.
- e. Provision of rural financial counselling services.
- f. Support to mitigate the effects of drought on the health and wellbeing of farming families and impacted local communities.
- g. Sharing, coordinating, collaborating and communicating information on drought preparedness, response and recovery policies and programs being developed and implemented.
- h. Ensuring consistency of drought policy and reform objectives and complementarity of drought preparedness, response and recovery programs.
- i. Contributing to the development of quality, publicly available data, including but not limited to:
 - i. Weather, seasonal and climate forecasts¹¹;
 - ii. Regional and local predictive real time drought indicator information;
 - iii. A consistent early warning system for drought; and
 - iv. An improved understanding of fodder crops and holdings across Australia.
- j. Monitoring and evaluating relevant programs to ensure these are meeting the objectives of the National Drought Policy.
- k. Every four years, reviewing with other National Drought Policy Parties, and amending where agreed, the National Drought Policy.

¹⁰ National Drought Agreement: Attachment A: Principles for Reform.

¹¹ Productivity Commission 2009, *Government Drought Support*, Report No. 46, Final Inquiry Report, Melbourne, p. 180-1.

C. Roles and Responsibilities of Industry, Farm Businesses, Local Government and Community Groups

The roles and responsibilities of industry associations, farm businesses, local government and community groups are outlined below.

Industry Associations, working with other relevant bodies, including Research and Development Corporations¹², are responsible for:

- a. Providing information to farmers and rural and regional communities, on and increasing awareness of:
 - i. Farm management practices for drought preparedness, management and recovery;
 - ii. Business literacy and skill development opportunities, including peer review boards or similar;
 - iii. Drought support measures provided by government, and non-government bodies;
- b. Working with governments to assess the effectiveness of government drought programs.
- c. Working with governments to continue to review and amend as appropriate the National Drought Policy and the specific measures and programs contained therein.

Farm businesses are responsible for:

- a. Preparing their business for periods of drought including by building their awareness and understanding of the suite of risk management tools available to them.
- b. Preparing family and employees for drought;
- c. Developing and maintaining a drought plan;
- d. Building their drought resilience through the adoption of measures best suited to their circumstances¹³.

Local Government are responsible for¹⁴:

NOTE: to be developed in consultation with ALGA. Proposed responsibilities for consideration:

- a. Preparing their community for periods of drought including by building awareness and understanding of the impact of drought and options for managing drought impact.
- b. Building community drought resilience by:
 - i. Taking stock of drought infrastructure and implementing upgrades and or extensions where needed;
 - ii. Reviewing community drought support services and bolstering where required¹⁵;

¹² Primary Industries Research and Development Act 1989, 3(a)(i),(ii) and (v). See too <http://www.ruralrdc.com.au/news/drought-support-information/>.

¹³ AgForce, *Agricultural Business Cycle: a new approach to drought policy*.

¹⁴ P. Kenny, S. Knight, M. Peters, D. Stehlik, B. Wakelin, S. West and L. Young (2008), *It's about people: changing perspectives on dryness – A report to government by an expert social panel*, Commonwealth of Australia.

¹⁵ Keogh, M., Granger, R. and Middleton, S (2011) *Drought Pilot Review Panel: a review of the pilot of drought reform measures in Western Australia*, Canberra, September. P.75-6.

- iii. Working with industry to develop drought plans and preparedness.

Community Groups are responsible for:

NOTE: to be developed in consultation with community groups. Proposed responsibility:

- a. That community groups and charities consult with industry associations and government on how best to support drought-impacted families and communities.

D. Commonwealth Government Support Measures

In accordance with the roles and responsibilities of the Commonwealth Government as outlined in Section B, and in order to contribute to achieving the objectives and outcomes of this Policy, the Commonwealth Government commits to take forward the following programs and measures.

Commonwealth Government programs and measures that **enable** farmers and **rural and regional communities** to **prepare** for drought:

| Category | Program | Proposed amendments to current program |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Information and data | Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) Forecasting and other relevant services | BOM continue to develop effective extension services in conjunction with industry to increase producer capacity to utilise available information. For review at biennial ‘Drought Forum’ – BOM to provide summary of current services that can assist farmers prepare for and recover from drought. BOM to provide advice on where these services could be improved or augmented. Commonwealth to consider increasing investment in infrastructure that enables effective weather forecasting and monitoring. ¹⁶ |
| | Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) | For review at biennial ‘Drought Forum’ – RDCs to provide a summary of their programs that assist farmers build drought resilience. RDCs, with industry, to review and assess effectiveness of drought preparedness programs and research. |
| | Farm Hub | To be expanded to include information on resilience measures. |
| Farm Business Resilience | Rural Business Resilience Programs | Provide one-off funding to explore how to roll out a National Farm Business Resilience Program similar to that currently provided in South Australia by Rural Business Support. Consider how to best deliver such a program, and on-going funding on a co-payment basis. |

¹⁶ Laurie, A., M. Curtis, R. Heath, L. Darragh, & K. McRobert (2019), *Australian agriculture: an increasingly risky business*, Research Report, Australian Farm Institute, p. 69.

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| | Farm Debt Mediation Scheme | To establish a national farm debt mediation scheme. |
| Tax | Income averaging ¹⁷ | To consider extending to agriculture-dependent small businesses and small business in rural and regional towns. ¹⁸ |
| | Farm Management Deposits ¹⁹ | To consider extending access to Farm Management Deposits to farm businesses, contractors, and agriculture-dependent small businesses. ²⁰ |
| | Accelerated depreciation ²¹ | Maintain immediate deduction for certain expenditure related to the installation of water facilities used to conserve or convey water, fencing, fodder storage assets, horticultural plants, grapevines. |
| | Treatment of abnormal receipts (deferral of profits) ²² | Maintain deferral of profits for: disaster relief payments; grants and subsidies; profit from forced disposal or death of livestock; insurance payments; double wool clips. |
| | Full tax deductibility for financial advice and administration of adoption of farm financial risk management tools | To provide full tax deductibility for financial advice and administration of adoption of financial risk management tools in order to increase the adoption of farm financial risk management advice and tools such as insurance, futures, forward contracts, derivatives or indexes, mutual funds ²³ . |
| Insurance | Farm Income Protection Insurance | For review at biennial ‘Drought Forum’ – Examination of conditions required to establish a viable agricultural income protection insurance market in Australia. |
| Concessional Loans | Regional Investment Corporation (RIC) | Application process to be expedited and communication with potential and current applicants improved. For review at biennial ‘Drought Forum’ - Suite of RIC products to be reviewed for uptake and effectiveness. |
| Funding of additional drought resilience programs | Future Drought Fund | Drought Resilience Funding Plan to align with the objectives, outcomes and measures identified in this policy. |

¹⁷ INCOME TAX ASSESSMENT ACT 1997 - SECT 392.10

¹⁸ Issues to resolve: Defining an ‘agriculture-dependent small business’ and ‘small businesses in rural and regional towns’ — eg no of employees; turnover; location; the extent to which a small business would need to rely on farming businesses for income to be eligible.

¹⁹ INCOME TAX ASSESSMENT ACT 1997 – Sect. 393.25

²⁰ See footnote 18 above.

²¹ INCOME TAX ASSESSMENT ACT 1997 – Division 392

²² INCOME TAX ASSESSMENT ACT 1997 – Division. 385

²³ Laurie, A., M. Curtis, R. Heath, L. Darragh, & K. McRobert (2019), *Australian agriculture: an increasingly risky business*, Research Report, Australian Farm Institute, p. 31-32.

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| Community | Community Resilience Program | To consider introducing a drought-specific grants program to support drought preparation initiatives by local governments ²⁴ . |
| Mental Health and Wellbeing | | To work with the National Rural Health Alliance to develop permanent and effective mental health services. |
| Environmental Stewardship | Natural Capital Initiative | For review at biennial 'Drought Forum' – to review suite of measures aimed at enabling farmers to manage their natural capital during drought. To consider improvements to those measures and their incorporation under this Policy. |

Commonwealth Government measures that **support** farmers and **rural and regional communities** during drought and to recover from drought:

| Category | Program | Proposed amendments to current program |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Information | Farm Hub | To maintain and expand. |
| Household Assistance | Farm Household Allowance (FHA) | Changes to FHA announced up to September 2019 to be implemented expeditiously. Further improvements to be considered and implemented. For review at Biennial 'Drought Forum' . ²⁵ |
| Communities | Drought Communities Program | For review at biennial 'Drought Forum' - eligibility criteria and implementation to be reviewed and amended as agreed. |
| Water | | To extend the On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme to all farm businesses. |
| Environmental Stewardship | Biosecurity | To provide pest and weed management support during and in recovery from drought. |
| Rural and farm workforce | Employee assistance program | To consider a new program aimed at maintaining the skilled rural and farm labour workforce during drought. |

E. State and Territory Government Support Measures

In accordance with the roles and responsibilities of state and territory governments as outlined in Section B, and in order to contribute to achieving the objectives and outcomes of this Policy, state and territory governments commit to take forward the following programs and measures.

²⁴ Grants could include providing assistance for local governments to meet their roles and responsibilities in Section C of this Policy.

²⁵ M. Lawrence, G. Somerset, R. Slonim (2019) *Rebuilding the FHA: a better way forward for supporting farmers in financial hardship. An independent review of the Farm Household Allowance.* p 11-16.

State and territory measures that **enable** farmers and **rural and regional communities** to **prepare** for drought:

| Category | Program | Notes |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Information | Regional weather data | To work with the Bureau of Meteorology, and other relevant services providers, to enhance regional drought forecasting services ²⁶ . |
| | Farming Practice Programs | To maintain or expand current drought resilience farming practice programs and/or consider establishing new programs ²⁷ . |
| | Business Training Programs | To promote and co-fund with the Commonwealth the roll out of programs similar to the South Australia Rural Business Support farm business resilience programs. To maintain or expand current farm business capacity building programs and/or consider establishing new programs ²⁸ . |
| | In-drought Assistance Programs | To maintain or expand current initiatives providing drought assistance information and/or consider establishing new initiatives ²⁹ . |
| Concessional Loans | | To maintain or expand existing concessional loan products for drought preparedness, management |

²⁶ Examples of existing programs include:

- NSW: additional weather info gathering infrastructure
- NSW: Enhanced Drought Information System
- QLD: Long paddock
- VIC: products to improve climate literacy of farmers and advisors
- WA: Invested in Doppler radar infrastructure and 100 additional weather stations.

²⁷ Examples of existing programs include:

- NSW 'Managing and preparing for drought' technical info
- QLD: Drought and Climate Adaptation Program
- SA: PIRSA Adverse Events Recovery Framework for Primary Production (response to a Drought Risk Assessment process)
- NT: Grazing Land Management Courses
- NT: Quarterly Feed Advisory Outlook
- TAS: Online Feed and Fodder Register

²⁸ Examples of existing programs include:

- NSW: Farm Business Skills Professional Development Program
- NSW: Young Farmer Business Program
- SA: Pathways to Profit Program
- SA: Farm Business Management Skill Set
- WA: Building Farm Business Capacity Project
- WA: eConnect Grainbelt initiative

²⁹ Examples of existing programs include:

- NSW: Drought Hub
- VIC: Agriculture Victoria: website
- QLD: Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority: website
- SA: Primary Industries and Regions SA: website
- TAS: Dept of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment: website
- WA: Primary Industries and Regional Development: website
- QLD: Long paddock

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| | | and recovery and/or consider establishing new concessional loan products. |
| Health | Mental Health and Well Being Support | To maintain or expand current <u>permanent</u> programs providing mental health and other wellbeing services and/or consider establishing new permanent services ³⁰ . |

State and Territory Government measures that **support** farmers and **rural and regional communities** during drought and to recover from drought:

| Category | Program | Notes |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Drought Coordination | | To convene a Drought Coordination group when appropriate including government, industry and community groups to monitor drought conditions, identify gaps in support, and limit duplication. Drought coordination could include the appointment of drought liaison officers or similar. |
| Community Support | Drought support grants | To consider establishing a Drought Support Community Grants Scheme to fund local government in-drought community support programs ³¹ . |
| Youth/Education | | To identify, monitor and respond to the impact of drought on young people, including on their access to education ³² . |
| Animal Welfare | Emergency animal welfare support | Management of animal welfare to be consistent with current law. |
| Infrastructure | | Identify infrastructure projects in drought-impacted areas that can be fast-tracked. |
| Rates and Fixed charges | | For review at biennial ‘Drought Forum’ – Examination of rates and other fixed charges relief measures for their effectiveness in achieving the objectives of this Policy ³³ . |

³⁰ Examples of existing programs include:

- NSW: Additional Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP) Coordinators
- QLD: Royal Flying Doctor Drought Wellbeing Service
- QLD: Tackling Regional Adversity through Integrated Care
- TAS: Rural Alive and Well outreach service
- VIC: Mental Health Support
- VIC: National Centre for Farmer Health
- Look Over the Farm Gate Program (Joint initiative of Ag Vic, VFF, RFDS, NCFH, CFA, CWA)
- WA: Social Support and Rural Counselling Services
- WA: Regional Men’s Health initiative

³¹ An example of an existing program is: QLD: Community Drought Support package

³² Examples of existing programs include:

- QLD: Living Away from Home Allowance
- QLD: Increased school transport allowances
- VIC: Back to School Support
- VIC: Camps, Sports and Excursion fund
- VIC: Drought Kindergarten Support
- NSW: Drought Relief Payments for Preschools

³³ Examples of fixed costs programs include:

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| Other Cost Relief Measures | | For review at Biennial ‘Drought Forum’ – to review existing and past cost relief measures for their effectiveness in contributing to the objectives of this Policy. To consider implementing and/or amending consistent with the outcomes of the review. |
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F. National Drought Policy Governance

A **National Drought Policy Committee** (the Committee) will be established to oversee implementation, monitoring, review and amendment of this Policy.

The Committee will include a representative of:

- The Commonwealth Government
- Each State and Territory Government
- The Australian Local Government Association
- The National Farmers’ Federation
- Each State Farming Organisation
- A National Rural Community Organisation³⁴

The Committee will be advised by a Sub-Committee of technical experts with practical experience in the fields of drought measures, agriculture, and rural community resilience.

The Committee will meet at least once a year to report on the functioning of the Policy overall, as well as progress on taking forward respective roles, responsibilities, measures and programs.

The Committee will have a rotating chair responsible for the agenda.

Each member will provide a staff support officer to work as part of the Committee Secretariat.

The NFF will provide initial coordination and support services to establish the Committee.

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- QLD: Land rent rebates
 - QLD: Drought assistance land rent deferral
 - NSW: Class 1 Ag Vehicle registration fee waiver
 - NSW: Farm Innovation Fund Interest Charges fee waiver
 - NSW: Grazing Permit fee waiver
 - NSW: Local Land Services Rates fee waiver
 - NSW: Wild Dog Fence fee waiver
 - QLD: Drought Relief from Electricity Charges Scheme
 - NSW and QLD: Water license fee waivers

³⁴ Selection of a representative from a national, rural community organisations to be determined.

G. Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

Drought Forum

A '**Drought Forum**' (the Forum) will be held every second year that brings together all stakeholders to discuss the full scope of issues related to drought impact and management.

The Forum will include sessions on, but not limited to, community drought support services, mental health and wellbeing, youth, drought-resilience farming practice (crops/livestock/horticulture/permanent plantings/other), and financial resilience.

The Forum will include consideration of reports commissioned by the Drought Committee on the effectiveness of existing drought resilience and support measures and programs.

The Forum will also invite input on the functioning of the National Drought Policy from all interested stakeholders.

The Committee will report on implementation of the Policy to the **Drought Forum**.

Outcomes from the Forum will inform the deliberations of the Committee in formally reviewing the Policy.

The NFF will take responsibility for coordinating the first Drought Forum.

The coordination of subsequent Forums is to be decided by the Committee.

National Drought Policy Review

The Committee will formally review implementation of the functioning of the overall policy and effectiveness of each specific measure and program once every four years and decide on any amendments to the Policy before the end of the fourth year.

In addition to monitoring implementation of the Policy, the Committee will also:

- Identify and agree on the criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the Policy generally and each specific measure and program. Effectiveness will be determined against the Policy Objectives and Outcomes;
- Commission studies measuring the effectiveness of measures and programs where required. Costs and responsibilities for progressing studies will be determined by the Committee;
- Publically report on the outcomes of studies measuring the effectiveness of measures and programs at the same time as making public its recommendations for amending the Policy and specific measures and programs; and,
- Recommend amendments aimed at improving the effectiveness of the Policy generally and specific measures and programs.

It is proposed the Regional Australia Institute, or other independent organization, lead the work assessing the effectiveness of National Drought Policy measures and programs.

Parties to the National Drought Policy will decide whether to agree to any amendments to their specific roles, responsibilities, measures and programs under the Policy as recommended by the Committee within six months of the Committee making its final set of recommendations. If a Party does not agree to a proposed amendment, the Party should provide a 'statement of reasons' for not agreeing to the proposed amendment. Where amendments are not agreed, existing roles, responsibilities, measures and programs will remain.

Enforceability

Parties to the National Drought Policy do not intend the Policy, or any of its parts, to be legally enforceable. Recognising the hardship caused by drought and desiring to contribute to enduring approaches to successfully managing drought in Australia, Parties commit, however, to do all they can to support implementation of the Policy in good faith and to the fullest extent possible.

A Party can withdraw their support for the Policy at any time with six months' notice.

H. Parties to the National Drought Policy

Parties to the National Drought Policy, listed below, are those who commit to implement their roles and responsibilities, programs and measures under this Policy.

| Party | Name of representative (position) | Contact details |
|------------------------------|--|------------------------|
| National Farmers' Federation | Ms Fiona Simson (President) | |
| (Federal Government) | | |
| (State Government) | | |
| (Territory Government) | | |
| (State Farming Organisation) | | |
| (Local Government) | | |
| (Community Groups) | | |

I. Signatories

Signatories to the National Drought Policy are any organisation or individual that supports the objectives of this Policy.

| Signatory | Name of representative (position) | Contact details |
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