

12 May 2025

Extension of drought preparedness program good news for farmers

A popular initiative that enhances drought resilience across NSW and provides support to farmers has been extended.

The Southern NSW and Southern Queensland Northern NSW (SQNNSW) Innovation Hubs are excited to continue their partnership with Local Land Services (LLS) to deliver the Drought Adoption Officers program until the end of 2025.

With 50:50 joint funding for the program's extension provided by LLS and the two Hubs, through the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund, seven Drought Adoption Officers strategically located across NSW will continue to help landholders and rural communities build drought resilience.

Reflecting on the performance of the program to date, Southern NSW Innovation Hub Director Cindy Cassidy said the Drought Adoption Officers have built, and continue to build, strong relationships with farmers, fostering trust and providing informed advice to build drought resilience.

"They contribute significantly to long-term sustainability by consistently promoting resilient agricultural practices and providing tailored advice.

"Drought Adoption Officers have already demonstrated their value by serving as key connectors between farmers and available resources, including tools, knowledge and training opportunities," she said.

"I am delighted this extension of the program means many more farmers and community members will benefit from tailored advice, expertise and demonstrations that will help them make informed decisions in the face of climate variability."

SQNNSW Innovation Hub Director Professor Ben Lyons said the place-based nature of the program was its strength.

"Drought is a place-based challenge, so having local adoption officers available to support their areas is a real benefit of the partnership," Professor Lyons said.

In 2024, there were 623 consultations, 117 on-farm visits and 170 events attended by the Drought Adoption Officers as part of the program. Some of the key impact areas where the Officers are improving drought preparedness for farmers include:

- Livestock feeding and containment advice
- Farm water management and quality
- Pasture health and resilience

Southern NSW Riverina-based Drought Adoption Officer Geoff Minchin has welcomed the extension of the program.

"It's so good to have continuity in these roles for an extended period of time so we can continue assisting people, which is particularly important with the very dry season we're experiencing at the moment," he said.

Geoff says Drought Adoption Officers are often working with farmers who are overwhelmed and unsure of how to manage a challenging situation.

“It’s a stressful time of year going into Winter, but being able to get people on track, to help them make a few decisions that they feel comfortable with is really, really rewarding. We’re able to take the stress out of some of those decisions for them.”

So far, the [Drought Adoption Officer program](#) has encouraged landholders to adopt drought-resilience practices including:

- Improved knowledge and skills – improved understanding of key drought-resilience practices, such as feed budgeting, pasture management and livestock nutrition.
- Adoption of confinement feeding systems – following demonstrations several landholders expressed an interest in adopting or improving confinement feeding set ups.
- Enhanced use of decision-making tools – such as the Drought & Supplementary Feeding Calculator (DASFC) has been popular with farmers to use for better planning and resource allocation during drought.
- Integration of natural capital management – landholders incorporating biodiversity conservation and carbon market participation into farming systems.
- Sustained engagement – events such as the Henty Field Days and localised workshops maintaining ongoing dialogue, ensuring access to expert advice and resources.

- ENDS -

Media contacts:

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About Southern NSW Innovation Hub

[Southern NSW Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub](#) connects farmers and rural communities with practical, modern solutions to adapt to a changing climate. As part of a national network, we collaborate with trusted organisations, experts, researchers, and community groups to drive sustainable change with the long-term goal of improved drought resilience.

Southern NSW Innovation Hub is one of eight Hubs established nationally through funding from the Australian Government’s Future Drought Fund. Southern NSW Innovation Hub works closely with its partners to create a skilled, flexible network that can identify and solve the challenges and harness opportunities posed by a changing climate. Southern NSW Innovation Hub partners include Charles Sturt University (Hub lead), Australian National University, NSW Local Land Services (LLS), NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), Rural Aid, University of Canberra, and the Farming Systems Groups Alliance.