

# OUR IMPACT 2025

A series of **case studies** that capture the unique impact of the Southern NSW Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub



SOUTHERN NSW  
**Innovation Hub**

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE,  
LANDSCAPES AND COMMUNITIES



## Building bridges between research & industry

Southern NSW Innovation Hub is embedding knowledge, skills, and networks to support the extension and adoption of research while developing future leaders of rural research.

### BACKGROUND

Southern NSW Innovation Hub is committed to building research extension capabilities in NSW by bringing together researchers whose studies relate to drought and climate resilience or rural and agricultural innovation.

This has been the work of, first, the Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Engage program, and now the Emerging Researchers Network.

### RESEARCHERS DEVELOPING SKILLS & CONNECTIONS

Talking about establishing the Emerging Researchers Network, Angus Dunne, Program Manager at Southern NSW Innovation Hub and former participant in HDR Engage said, *"Students and coordinators wanted to move to a model that was a bit more exclusive, with greater opportunity to build skills, capacity and in-person connection, as well as strong relationships within the agricultural industry."*

Dr Anne Johnson, Charles Sturt University researcher and former HDR Engage participant said, *"It's very easy to get stuck in your own PhD and the problem you are trying to solve. The Emerging Researchers Network is an excellent opportunity to take a big step back and consider what the big issues are that we will all be dealing with in the future."*

## FORGING LINKS BETWEEN ACADEMIA & INDUSTRY

While completing his master's thesis on agrivoltaics (the multi-use of land for agricultural production and energy generation), Angus Dunne received a scholarship from Southern NSW Innovation Hub and was part of the HDR Engage program. He could see even then that a gap existed between the world of rural research and the agriculture industry that needed to be bridged.

*"Based on my experience in academic research, we don't always develop a great understanding of different parts of the industry. We can get stuck viewing the world from where we stand – research, agronomy, technology – and the narrative about who plays what role in Australian agriculture is narrowed."*

Angus said, *"Universities and researchers often lead the way in the generation of new knowledge and innovative ways to solve problems. The constraint is that most people don't read scientific papers which are the main mechanisms for this work being shared."*

**The Emerging Researchers Network seeks to help researchers gain the skills, networks, and resources necessary for them to connect with and share knowledge among the people in the industry who will use the research**

ANGUS DUNNE  
PROGRAM MANAGER  
SOUTHERN NSW INNOVATION HUB  
& FORMER HDR ENGAGE PARTICIPANT



## THE VALUE OF NETWORKS

Dr Anne Johnson understands how beneficial networking is for research students and the potential impact of Southern NSW Innovation Hub programs like HDR Engage and the Emerging Researchers Network.

*From the behavioural science part of my PhD research, the evidence shows that building relationships with like-minded people, having connections, and being able to relate to the importance of the issues is how people grow."*

DR ANNE JOHNSON  
CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY RESEARCHER &  
FORMER HDR ENGAGE PARTICIPANT

*"The HDR Engage group was especially valuable during COVID as a way to connect while we weren't able to meet up on campus. Studying for a PhD or similar can be a lonely journey. I don't know what I would have continued if I hadn't been able to make regular connections with people struggling through the same thing."*

## THE HUB'S EMERGING RESEARCHERS NETWORK

The first cohort of 11 researchers joined the Emerging Researchers Network in March 2025, coming together from the Australian National University, University of Canberra, University of NSW, and Charles Sturt. Their involvement in the 12-month program will build their extension skills, create a platform for their effective engagement with industry and employment opportunities. The group also receives mentoring through the Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (APEN) and attends fully-funded in-person workshops together throughout the year.



STAY  
IN  
TOUCH

[csu.edu.au/research/southern-nsw-drought-resilience-hub](https://csu.edu.au/research/southern-nsw-drought-resilience-hub)



Australian Government  
Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry



Future  
Drought  
Fund



SOUTHERN NSW  
Innovation Hub  
SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE,  
LANDSCAPES AND COMMUNITIES

This project is funded by the  
Australian Government's Future Drought Fund

