

# OUR IMPACT 2024

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

## Making soil science accessible to enhance drought resilience

Building a valuable network of producers, land managers, advisers and researchers so that science can be put into practice to improve soil health and productivity.

### BACKGROUND

As part of the rollout of the National Soils Strategy, the Southern NSW Innovation Hub appointed Regional Soils Coordinators Luke Beange and Blake Palmer who share the role and work via the Hub's partner organisation NSW Department of Primary Industries & Regional Development (DPIRD).

*Regional Soils Coordinators act as translators, making soil science accessible. It's our role to make the soil experts available to advisers, researchers, agronomists and producers to strengthen soil knowledge more broadly.*

**LUKE BEANGE**  
SOILS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER  
& REGIONAL SOILS COORDINATOR



*Luke Beange and Blake Palmer  
Regional Soils Coordinators, NSW DPIRD  
with Dale Stringer, Chief Knowledge Broker,  
Southern NSW Innovation Hub*

Key objectives of the National Soil Strategy are to prioritise soil health, empower soil innovation and stewardship, and strengthen soil knowledge and capability. The Regional Soils Coordinators have delivered this through the establishment of a unique soils Community of Practice (CoP) and by consistently sharing quality scientific information to enhance drought resilient practices.

When the Regional Soils Coordinators program was envisaged, Southern NSW Innovation Hub's idea was to tap into the existing soil science knowledge within NSW DPIRD's soils unit. As one of the Hub's key partner organisations, NSW DPIRD was keen to collaborate on the project and identified Luke Beange and Blake Palmer as people with expertise from their organisation who were right for the role.

*The national Soils Capacity Gap Analysis is a key outcome of the Regional Soils Coordinators program and the most important work we've done. Through this we identified that the number of experts in soil science is diminishing so there was a huge risk that their knowledge would be lost if it wasn't shared.*

**LUKE BEANGE**  
SOILS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER  
& REGIONAL SOILS COORDINATOR





## OUTCOMES

Luke Beange said, “Soil science is one area of agriculture where there is a difficulty in finding expertise – a lot of technical know-how is needed to understand. That’s where we come in bridging the knowledge gap and acting as soil science translators.”

To do this the Regional Soils Coordinators have been hosting monthly webinars to present quality, scientific soils information tailored to the needs of landholders as identified by the network. To date, approximately 20 webinars have been run and 100 to 400 people register for each online webinar. They’ve also built a database of more than 850 subscribers, which has been boosted by the Southern NSW Innovation Hub’s network.

Luke said, “The popularity of our webinars and how well attended they are speaks for itself in terms of the value delivered from the information we provide.” With plans to publish the webinars on YouTube which can be accessed from the NSW DPIRD Soils website, this content will become legacy knowledge that can be used long into the future.

“The role of the Regional Soils Coordinators is all about relationships. The Community of Practice (CoP) that has been built is invaluable and it has encouraged people to share their unique insights and knowledge so that more farmers and landholders can improve soil health,” said Luke.

In Luke’s opinion perhaps the most important output of the Regional Soils Coordinators program is the national Soils Capacity Gap Analysis which aimed to identify critical gaps in soil management knowledge and capability. The Southern NSW Innovation Hub’s network of partners and contacts has supported this analysis and contributed to maximising its reach. Its next phase is to address these knowledge gaps and ensure information transfer that empowers landholders to make better-informed decisions that suit their systems and businesses.

*Up until June 2024, funding for the Regional Soils Coordinators was provided as part of the Building Landcare Community and Capacity (BLCC) Program which is an element of the Smart Farms Program under Phase 2 of the National Landcare Program.*

*The Regional Soils Coordinators are now supported by the Australian Government through funding from the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program under the Natural Heritage Trust.*

*The national Regional Soils Coordinators Group at a workshop in November 2023*

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