



Charles Sturt  
University

# Future Drought Fund draft investment plan and funding strategy

6 December 2023

Office of the Vice-Chancellor  
Charles Sturt University

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6 December 2023

Mr Adam Fennessy PSM  
Secretary,  
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
GPO Box 858,  
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Mr Fennessy

### Consultations on the draft investment plan and funding strategy for the Future Drought Fund

Charles Sturt University welcomes this opportunity to provide a submission on the framework for future investments from the Future Drought Fund. Drought resilience and adaptation to climate change are key issues of concern for the regional communities we serve. That awareness and our long history in agricultural and environmental research and education inspired the University's successful bid to host one of the Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs set up under the Future Drought Fund.

As the nation faces another challenging summer, the importance of initiatives like the Future Drought Fund and the Hubs only becomes clearer. The recent Productivity Commission inquiry on the Future Drought Fund confirmed the value and effectiveness of the Drought Hubs and made clear recommendations on how to build on their early success. Minister Watts' prompt action in response to the Commission's findings has provided some short-term security for the Hubs, but drought is a long-term challenge and the projects and partnerships facilitated by the Hubs require longer-term certainty if they are to maintain the momentum to date. The University suggests that providing this certainty should be a priority for immediate action once the investment plan and funding strategy have been finalised, if not sooner. This should involve a commitment to at least maintain current levels of funding over the next four to six years.

Charles Sturt University also suggests that the investment plan and funding strategy should include explicit provision for the Future Drought Fund to support initiatives across the full research, development and extension continuum longer timelines for investment rounds to allow for improved co-design of new initiatives and to facilitate greater collaboration between Drought Hubs and existing and new partners, as well as across the network of Drought Hubs; and targeted funding for on-the-ground action in five key impact areas: Social and Cultural Resilience, Enhancing and Preserving the Natural Environment, Ground and Canopy Cover, Soil Health, and Water and Water Use. More information on each of these issues is included in the attached submission.

As Australia's largest regional university and a major contributor to regional workforce skills, capabilities and knowledge, Charles Sturt recognises that responding to the challenges of drought and climate change will require diverse skills, new knowledge, and coordinated action across all levels of government and in partnership with regional communities. We therefore suggest that there is value in exploring opportunities to align activity under the Future Drought Fund, and the Drought Hubs in particular, with wider Australian Government priorities and programs including the National Reconstruction Fund, the National Skills Agreement, the revised National Science and Research Priorities and, for the NSW, Queensland, and South Australian Hubs, the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

In closing, I would like to extend an invitation to the Future Drought Fund Consultative Committee and the Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs Advisory Committee to visit the AgriPark at the Charles Sturt Wagga Wagga campus, home to the Southern NSW Drought Resilience Adoption and



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Innovation Hub, to see the work being carried out by the Hub, and the other world-class agricultural and environmental education, research and innovation under way at the University. I would also be happy to provide further information on any of the issues and ideas raised in the attached submission.

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to this important conversation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Renée Leon".

**Professor Renée Leon PSM**  
**Vice-Chancellor and President**

cc: Mr. Brent Finlay, Chair, Future Drought Fund Consultative Committee and Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs Advisory Committee

## Submission on the draft investment plan and funding strategy for the Future Drought Fund

Charles Sturt University is Australia's largest regional university, with more than 36,000 students and almost 2,000 staff. We are a unique multi-campus institution with campuses in some of New South Wales' fastest-growing and most vibrant regional communities: in Albury-Wodonga, Bathurst, Dubbo, Goulburn, Orange, Port Macquarie, and Wagga Wagga with strong connections to surrounding rural and remote communities. We also have smaller campuses and study centres located in other areas throughout rural and regional south-eastern Australia. The University is also one of the nation's largest providers of online education, so we have an essential role in boosting higher education participation and attainment, not just in regional NSW but across the country.

Charles Sturt's history in agriculture and environmental education, research, and innovation extends back almost 130 years, to the establishment of the Wagga Wagga Experimental Farm. As around 75% of Charles Sturt graduates go on to work in regional areas, our contribution to the regional workforce in these fields is even more significant, as is our graduates' influence on the lives and health of regional residents, the sustainability, productivity, and profitability of regional businesses, and on innovation, sustainability and resilience in Australia's agriculture sector.

The University's footprint extends across most of NSW's agricultural regions, and we have a long and proud track record in meeting the education, training, and research needs of regional students, communities, and employers. Our experience, our connections with agricultural regions and business, our key role in educating the agricultural workforce, and globally recognised research strength in agricultural and environmental science mean Charles Sturt University is uniquely placed to help Australian farmers and farming communities adapt to climate change.

It was this experience, and our strong ties to regional communities, that led the University to successfully bid to host the Southern NSW Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub in 2020. The Productivity Commission's evaluation of the Future Drought Fund (FDF) confirmed the value and impact of the Drought Hubs, noting that they have responsibilities that include the "dissemination and uptake of information and knowledge" under a wider FDF knowledge strategy, and "have led to greater collaboration between industry, natural resource managers, researchers and community groups". This has certainly been our experience with the Southern NSW Hub. It is now well-established with a solid track record of delivery against the goals of the program and for our partners across the region. It has helped to consolidate a range of cross-sector partnerships, catalyse the formation of new ones, and provided an effective vehicle for the transmission and translation of knowledge.

The successful development and implementation of the Southern NSW Hub, and its track record to date, informs this response to the consultation on the draft investment plan and funding strategy for the Future Drought Fund.

## Consultation questions

In response to the questions underpinning the consultation process, Charles Sturt University offers the following comments.

### **To what extent do you agree with the following statement?**

*The draft Funding Plan provides an appropriate framework to guide spending on drought resilience initiatives.*

We agree that the draft Funding Plan provides an appropriate framework to guide spending on drought resilience initiatives.

The vision, aim and strategic objectives are coherent and achievable, though the University suggests that some clarification on the “function of agricultural landscapes” will be needed, perhaps to include specific reference to soil health, biodiversity, native vegetation, and other priorities. Improvement in soil health, for example, is a ‘win-win’ in that it leads to increased agricultural productivity as well as increased resilience in agricultural landscapes.

The final plan should also endorse the importance of basing land and biodiversity management strategies on the best available science.

### **How could the draft Funding Plan be improved to provide high-level guidance before funding decisions are made?**

Areas for improvement in high-level guidance for funding decisions include consideration of:

- the potential scale of impact arising from the proposal,
- how quickly it could be adopted by potential users (i.e. the proposal should show evidence of clear end user engagement and adoption pathways), and
- broader public benefits (e.g. improved soils).

### **To what extent do you agree with the following proposed investment stream to support drought preparedness?**

*Place-based Action and Partnerships – working with on-ground stakeholders to facilitate regional engagement, collaboration and action that is locally relevant (see section 6.1 of the draft Investment Strategy).*

We strongly support an emphasis on ‘Place-based Action and Partnerships’ in future investment.

While there is a clear case for a national strategy and plan of action to manage the impact of drought, in many cases the appropriate mitigation and ‘future-proofing’ actions will be regionally specific – a point acknowledged in the framework legislation and policies for the Future Drought Fund. There is a risk, however, that a push toward or preference for large-scale or national projects – often with the assumption that they involve lower administrative costs – could undermine the real local or regional effectiveness of drought resilience programs and the adoption of new practices, in part because they fail to take into account the vast size and variety of Australia’s agricultural landscape.

Local engagement with producers and processors is often key to such programs, and to other initiatives intended to boost productivity, promote innovation, and help farmers and communities become more resilient. Human relationships are key to effective systems change. Collaboration between farmers and technical or scientific experts helps identify local problems and possible solutions and helps create a sense of ‘ownership’ of ideas that increases the likelihood they will be

adopted by farmers. This also means that long term investment in human capital is needed, in both the 'supply side' of new ideas and the capability of farmers to understand and adopt them.

At a conceptual level, the importance and impact of place-based initiatives has been confirmed repeatedly by international research as well as the University's experience with other innovation, adoption, and translation programs. One consistent finding of research on the spillover effects of research translation initiatives is that they drop off sharply with distance. Fortunately, one of the notable strengths of the Future Drought Fund is the geographic spread of Drought Hubs. Their 'on the ground' presence means that programs and projects can be tailored to local needs and conditions. Similarly, knowledge generated elsewhere, such as across the wider Hub network, can also be translated into the local context.

**To what extent do you agree with the following proposed investment stream to support drought preparedness?**

*Information, Skills, and Capacity Building – supporting farmers and their communities to grow and share knowledge, tools, and practices needed to adapt to the challenges of drought and other climate risks (see section 6.2 of the draft Investment Strategy).*

We strongly agree with the proposed 'Information, Skills, and Capacity Building' investment stream as our experience to date with the Southern NSW Hub confirms that direct engagement with farmers has the most impact and provides flow-on benefits for processors and communities.

For example, the Southern NSW Hub's 'Capturing value of AgTech innovation on-farm' project has typified the success of involving farmers through the entire innovation cycle. A subset of farmers was brought in to interrogate a pilot concept that Meat and Livestock Australia developed to support ag-tech adoption, and were involved in the redesign and delivery of a new AgTech return on investment (ROI) calculator. The calculator provides farmers with an indication of the benefit or value they can capture of adopting on-farm technology that supports drought resilience. It is now being tested by a different cohort of 30+ farmers and is expected to launch in January 2024. By working with farmers and their advisors in developing and rolling out the tool we have built skills and capacity in assessment of the value of ag tech investment. This skills development is actively supporting the adoption of drought resilience technology.

Partners in the project include Charles Sturt University, the University's Global Digital Farm, Meat and Livestock Australia, the NSW Department of Primary Industries, KPMG, Riverina Local Land Services (LLS) and Farming Systems Groups (FSGs).

**To what extent do you agree with the following proposed investment stream to support drought preparedness?**

*Agricultural Landscapes Management – supporting the development, trial, demonstration, extension and adoption of better land management practices to build natural capital (see section 6.3 of the draft Investment Strategy).*

We agree with the proposed 'Agricultural Landscapes Management' investment stream. The Southern NSW Hub is already delivering projects and programs that support the development, proof, extension and adoption of better land management practices through our major Drought Resilient Soils and Landscapes program, which encompasses projects on the use of Stock Management Areas to promote soil recovery, demonstrating and promoting resilient pasture systems, and soil and water management.

**To what extent do you agree with the following proposed investment stream to support drought preparedness?**

*Innovation and Transformation – supporting new ideas to transform the agriculture sector’s resilience and preparedness for drought (see section 6.4 of the draft Investment Strategy).*

We strongly agree with the proposed ‘Innovation and Transformation’ investment stream, as the creation of new ideas and their translation into practical outcomes is essential for transforming the agriculture sector’s resilience and preparedness for drought.

Transformational change within the agricultural sector often comes from employing a number of different management strategies which can have a multiplying effect, rather than a single, ‘silver bullet’ solution. Unfortunately, Australian investment in research is low and declining. The funding that is available is increasingly steered toward translation and commercialisation, and is concentrated in large research organisations based in metropolitan centres. These organisations tend to have limited presence in regional (and especially agricultural) areas, with correspondingly poor knowledge of local conditions, challenges and opportunities.

Basic research underpins innovation, translation, and application. Without basic research, the nation will be increasingly unable to generate new ideas in response to emerging or accelerating challenges. And without basic research capability (people and infrastructure) in agricultural regions, Australian farmers will be forced to rely on information and ideas generated elsewhere, potentially only accessible at high cost and with correspondingly significant costs attached to translation into something suitable to their needs.

Drought Hubs help fill this gap and, moreover, have significantly more impact than some other research and innovation programs through their focus on improving the resilience of farming systems rather than individual components of the system, such as water. The Drought Hubs generate new knowledge and provide an effective mechanism for translating that knowledge on to the farm through integrated research, development and extension (RD&E) plans. There is the potential though, for the Drought Hubs to achieve even more provided they can directly support the generation of new knowledge rather than rely on it happening elsewhere. This might involve targeted, project-specific funding or partnerships at different scales (RD&E partnerships involving the Drought Hubs would be well within the scope and objectives of the revised National Science and Research Priorities and the National Reconstruction Fund).

**To what extent do you agree with the following proposed investment stream to support drought preparedness?**

*Enabling Activities – supporting knowledge sharing and measuring the impact of the FDF (see section 6.5 of the draft Investment Strategy).*

We support the proposed ‘Enabling Activities’ investment stream, as activities to support knowledge sharing and measurement of the impact of the Future Drought Fund are a logical corollary to the activities discussed above.

**What support and activities are most important to build drought resilience? Are there other activities not mentioned in the draft Investment Strategy that should be supported?**

In support of and as a complement to the proposed investment streams and the objectives of the Future Drought Fund, Charles Sturt University suggests the following priorities for the Fund:

1. Increasing and improving collaboration between stakeholders – producers, processors, agricultural sector peak bodies, natural resource management groups, state and Commonwealth government agencies, Regional Development Corporations, universities, and others.



2. Building on the knowledge base of drought resilient practices.
3. Identifying gaps in current RD&E activities in drought resilience and providing recommendations and pathways for how these gaps can be addressed (e.g. through hub activities or investment decisions).
4. Ensuring that the Future Drought Fund also bolsters the health and resilience of businesses and communities that depend on the agricultural sector.
5. Investment in natural capital, particularly soil health (soil acidity, salinity, sodicity, organic matter, ground cover, soil fertility).
6. Investment in human capital across all components of the agricultural sector, including a strong emphasis on building person-to-person the relationships that help drive translation and adoption. This should include targeted investment in initiatives that support skills and business development for First Nations peoples.

Specific priorities for building human capital include decision-making skills; data management and interpretation; agronomy and agribusiness skills; networks to support farmer-to-farmer learning; research and analysis; and community leadership and resilience.

These goals could be achieved by ensuring that FDF investments align with or leverage off other public and private investment under the National Reconstruction Fund, the National Skills Agreement, and the Australian Universities Accord. There is, for example, considerable potential in the use of microcredentials, tailored short courses, and new AQF credentials in building skills and capabilities.

FDF-backed scholarships or professional placements would help overcome the significant financial barriers faced by many regional workers and students who are seeking to develop or upgrade their skills.

7. International linkages: Drought resilience is a global challenge, and effective responses are being developed, tested and implemented around the world. Farmers and those involved in RD&E activities could benefit from the opportunity to visit international demonstration sites or to form linkages with relevant international networks, with the goal of tapping into the best new ideas and strategies.
8. Providing medium term (four to five years) funding security for the Drought Hubs to consolidate work to date, develop and apply RD&E plans in support of the proposed investment streams and other activities discussed above.

## Recommendations

Charles Sturt University recommends four specific actions for the Future Drought Fund to support the proposed investment streams and the suggested priorities:

1. A prompt decision on the medium and long-term funding arrangements for the Drought and Innovation Hubs, so as to remove uncertainty for partner organisations around staffing and future activities.

For example, investment of \$6.65 million per year over the next four years would allow the Southern NSW Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub to consolidate its work to date, maintain its current momentum, and expand its activities in key impact areas detailed below. This level of funding (approximately \$ 4.25 million per year from FDF with potential annual co-



investment of \$2.4 million from new hub partners and the University) would be consistent with current expenditure at the Hub while providing some provision for inflation and overall growing costs.

2. The FDF should support initiatives across the full research, development, and extension continuum.

Funding programs like the Long-term Trials of Drought Resilient Farming Practices grants and the Drought Innovation Grants tackle gaps in farmer and community knowledge about drought resilience and should be continued or expanded. It also enables greater opportunities for co-investment by RDCs and others in addressing the challenges around drought resilience.

3. Longer timelines for investment rounds, and better timing of calls for applications.

The University endorses the Productivity Commission's suggestion to focus on more long-term transformative funding programs and agrees with the finding in its interim report that short term incremental programs have high transaction costs. Longer-term projects require correspondingly more time to develop proposals. This would encourage greater collaboration between Hubs and their partners and allow for more effective co-design of bids.

The FDF also needs to be mindful of the scheduling of funding rounds and the potential for conflict with other major funding programs. The University also notes that holding rounds over the Christmas/New Year period is likely to lead to poor quality applications as many public sector organisations are closed or operating at reduced capacity at this time.

4. Targeted funding for on-the-ground action in five key impact areas:

- **Social, Cultural, and Commercial Resilience:** Encompasses our commitment to strengthening both rural and First Nations communities and fostering both economic and social well-being through aspiration-, capability- and capacity-building. This could include further work in regional communities to strengthen social and community resilience to any changes in relation to irrigation water strategies.
- **Enhancing and Preserving the Natural Environment:** Drives efforts to ensure a sustainable ecosystem for future generations.
- **Ground and Canopy Cover:** Optimising land productivity and recovery from drought by promoting effective ground and canopy cover management practices to prevent soil erosion, improve water retention, and enhance ecosystem health.
- **Soil Health:** Prioritising soil health and fertility to enhance agricultural productivity and environmental sustainability supporting carbon capture and sequestration targets.
- **Water and Water Use:** Promoting responsible water resource management for a sustainable water supply and ecosystem health – on-farm, in communities, and within waterways. This could include supporting water minimisation technology development and fast tracking adoption within agriculture thus further reducing the demand for irrigated water.

Funding for action in these key impact areas will need to be in addition to that provided for core activities such as capacity building, the Knowledge Broker Network and Hub staffing.

## Attachment: The SNSW Drought and Innovation Hub's strong track record

The Southern NSW Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub launched two and a half years ago in June 2021. Its primary mission is to support farmers and rural communities in the Southern NSW region in preparing for and mitigating drought impacts and capitalising on opportunities for recovery from drought. Foundational activities accomplished in the start-up phase included the recruitment of suitably qualified staff, the formation of a Hub Board, and the establishment of the Hub's Knowledge Broker Network.

The Knowledge Broker Network consists of 22 members (contributing a total of 8.6 full time equivalents worth of time) located across the Hub footprint and are mostly based in Hub partner organisations. These Knowledge Brokers are working with their communities to identify the major opportunities and barriers to drought resilience. Through the process of co-design, they are formulating targeted activities that respond to these opportunities and barriers.

The Hub has delivered its '[Baselining Drought](#)' study. This study included an extensive survey of farmer, community and first nations perceptions of drought and its impacts across southern NSW. The project garnered 260 stakeholder representations via the multi-faceted data collection process across the five distinct geographic nodes of the Hub. The insights from this report are critical to shaping our objectives and activities for the future. We are using it as a starting point to co-develop programs of work for the future hub.

The Hub started with an initial \$8 million of funding from the Future Drought Fund, combined with partner cash contributions of \$900,000. Since then, the Hub has secured an additional \$20.6 million in cash investment and \$12.3 million of in-kind contributions from partners and stakeholders in Southern NSW. This funding has supported 13 on-the-ground projects which seek to enhance the resilience of primary producers, communities and landscapes to drought. These projects cover activities ranging from the demonstration of known practices to long term field trials, to the development of early warning indicators for communities. These projects have seen the Hub partner with farming systems groups, Rural Research and Development Corporations, universities, peak bodies, state departments, and other Drought and Innovation Hubs to deliver impact.

The projects above also demonstrate the enhanced levels of collaboration and cooperation that the Hub has fostered amongst partner and collaborator organisations within its footprint. This has resulted in higher quality projects, that are better coordinated on the ground, and improved networks and information sharing. The Hub has also worked to enhance the skills of extension staff in its partner organisations, providing detailed training in values-based engagement and co-design.

### Our Forward plan 2024-2028

In the lead up to the next FDF investment planning process we have undertaken extensive review and public consultation with partners and stakeholders across southern NSW and the industry to develop an investment framework for the SNSW Hub 2024-2028. We have also taken on board feedback from the Productivity Commission, the FDF consultative committee and the FDF team in DAFF. Collectively, feedback has highlighted the need for the next iteration of our Hub to have the following structures and focus:

## On Ground Impact

We propose a set of imbedded key activity areas to achieve on the ground impact for 2024/28. These are programs of work co-designed with stakeholders, that will achieve targeted outcomes for drought and climate resilience in southern NSW. It is noted that the on the ground programs in the current Hub model have been achieved through investment and grant activities outside the core Hub funding.

Whilst the Hub has successfully secured valuable on the ground projects, the time and other resources consumed in doing that are far from efficient and the reactive nature of the process has meant inadequate co-design and that there is not a cohesive program, aligned as closely as possible with the priority areas for southern NSW and therefore, the impacts are less targeted.

For the future it is suggested that these Key Impact areas already identified with stakeholders would:

- Be a core investment by the FDF through the Hub head agreement.
- Converted from Impact areas to impact statements to detailed work plans using co-design and values based engagement strategies, *prior to commencement*. We are working to have this completed prior to 1 July 2024.
- Set out agreed, targeted impacts up front – with a MEL framework guiding development, implementation and reporting.
- Use a combination of research, development and extension tools to develop and deliver outcomes – depending on the issue or opportunity being pursued.
- Act as a mechanism to secure co-contributions from industry – both cash and in-kind more effectively leveraging the FDF investment around clear programs of work.
- Adhere to our current operating model and be undertaken by our partners and stakeholders who are best placed/skilled for delivery in the region, not by the Hub *per se*.
- Grouped into Key Impact Areas designed to support social, environmental and economic resilience for agriculture and agricultural focussed communities in SNSW as follows:
  1. Social and Cultural Resilience: Encompasses our commitment to strengthening both rural and First Nations communities and fostering both economic and social well-being.
  2. Enhancing and Preserving the Natural Environment: Drives efforts to ensure a sustainable ecosystem for future generations.
  3. Ground and Canopy Cover: Optimising land productivity and promoting effective ground and canopy cover management practices to prevent soil erosion, improve water retention, and enhance ecosystem health
  4. Soil Health: Prioritising soil health and fertility to enhance agricultural productivity and environmental sustainability.
  5. Water and Water Use: Promoting responsible water resource management for a sustainable water supply and ecosystem health.



### Modern Extension and Adoption

We propose to use core Hub grant funding to continue to develop new understanding, tools and approaches to support rapid and sustained adoption of innovations (tools, ideas and systems) by farmers and community members AND undertake training and development programs in these areas with extension professionals to enable more effective and efficient engagement with end users.

A feature of our current Hub has been creation of a bespoke co-design – people centred, values-based engagement – process targeted at the needs of agriculture and rural communities. To support the adoption and impact focus of our Hub we will continue to develop extension and adoption practice appropriate to modern agriculture and regional Australia based on social and behavioural sciences.

### **Capacity Building and Skill Development**

Current Hub activities have had a significant emphasis on empowering stakeholders through HDR scholarships, capacity-building workshops, training programs, and skill development initiatives to enable them to better support farmers and communities in the development of drought and climate resilience – although there are flow on benefits for the adoption of all innovation.

It has been recognised as a significant benefit of the Hub and will remain a feature of the next iteration of the Hub including, but not limited to, delivery and imbedding of modern extension and adoption skills.

### **Regional Coordination**

Partnering and collaboration across industry and the region is a founding principle of the Hub and again has been cited as a core benefit of the Hub. Over the 2024-28 period we will continue to work to increase collaboration across the SNSW region to synchronise efforts and share best practices. Competitive grant rounds historically used by investors in agricultural RD&E have tended to have a negative effect on regional collaboration and partnership. We have seen this effect on Hub partnerships when competitive investment opportunities have occurred over the last 2.5 years.

We propose that by embedding on the ground **Key Impact Areas** in core Hub funding and using co-design to develop the activity plans we will be able to build on the collaborative and partnering impact of our Hub. We will use this process to secure involvement and co-investment in Hub operations as well as bring people and organisations together in effective, focused teams. Where there are other opportunities to use the Hub to activate collaboration rather than competition, we would look to support the FDF to advance them.

Partnering and collaboration enhances the efficiency and impact of regional efforts to build resilience against drought and climate variability. Where resources and capacity are finite, they need to be employed optimally.

### **Community and First Nations Engagement**

Fostering meaningful collaboration and engagement with rural and First Nations communities, incorporating local and traditional knowledge and values into the Hub's initiatives and assisting in development of priorities and insights that help guide other investments will remain a core Hub activity.

Our Knowledge Broker network and our breadth of Partner networks has been important in the success of our current engagement activities. Based on feedback we will revise the structure of the Knowledge Broker Network to create full time paid positions in partner and/or stakeholder organisations across our footprint to act as a conduit between farmers and communities and the broader Hub network, provide access to resources and to capture ideas and priorities for investment. We will also review our Hub partner composition to potentially capture increased community, natural resource management, RDC and First Nations networks.

### **Leveraging Investment**

Our Hub has created real value and opportunity for partners and stakeholders in SNSW by attracting additional resources and funding to support development of drought and climate variability resilience projects for the region. It has been a great way to demonstrate Hub value to participants and cementing co-design and collaboration principles.

We propose to continue to use Hub resources to create and pursue other opportunities to secure investment in RD&E in identified priority areas. This allows enhanced reach and leveraging of FDF investment for greater on the ground impact.

**Research & Innovation Brokerage**

Introducing stakeholders to innovative technologies and solutions that enhance drought resilience and climate adaptation. Hub university partners conduct research in areas of identified need. The Hub connects stakeholders with cutting-edge tools and practices developed by internal and external innovators. We have identified the need to developing more formal approaches to identification and curation of relevant and appropriate existing research outcomes and this will be imbedded in the next phase of the Hub.