

OUR **IMPACT** 2026

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



Equipping emerging researchers to deliver real-world impact

The Emerging Researchers Network was a Southern NSW Innovation Hub capability-building program delivered in 2025. It supported postgraduate students from the Australian National University, the University of New South Wales, the University of Canberra and Charles Sturt University to expand the impact of their agricultural innovation and drought resilience research.

BACKGROUND

Eleven researchers participated in the Emerging Researchers Network program, developing communication and extension skills while strengthening their engagement with industry and rural communities. Participants were also paired with professional mentors through the Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (APEN), providing guidance, industry insight and career development support.

CONNECTING RESEARCH TO REAL-WORLD IMPACT

The program combined peer learning, mentoring and industry engagement to help researchers better understand how their work can contribute to practical outcomes for farmers and rural communities.

Participants reported that exposure to rural professionals, extension practitioners and industry leaders helped them think differently about the purpose and application of their research. It also encouraged many to consider future careers in agriculture and regional Australia.

The program made me realise more that research is meant to create an impact. It has strengthened my ability to engage more with stakeholders in designing projects

JOSEPH ANUMBA
RESEARCHER



TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO REAL-WORLD SITUATIONS

Adding to this, Researcher Clytie Binder reflected that, *"Through the program, I really got to explore how to translate my research into real-world situations in ways that are meaningful and practical for farmers and rural communities."*

Feedback from participants and facilitators indicated the program made a significant contribution to bridging the gap between drought resilience research and practice.

Another researcher commented, *"This program should be adopted as one of the core remits of the Hub. It is valuable for PhD students to learn these skills and receive practical guidance on connecting their research with industry and the real world."*

BUILDING NETWORKS AND CONFIDENCE

A key strength of the Emerging Researchers Network was the opportunity to build meaningful relationships with peers. These connections encouraged collaboration and helped participants better understand how their work contributes to broader industry and community outcomes.

Participants consistently highlighted the value of connecting with others on similar research journeys, helping overcome the isolation that early-career researchers can sometimes experience.

The biggest takeaway from being involved in the program is the power of connection. How collaboration between academics and industry can turn a good idea into real-world change.

MARIAM KHANAM | RESEARCHER
REFLECTING ON THE POWER OF CONNECTING WITH OTHERS

DEVELOPING SKILLS THROUGH INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

Industry engagement was central to the program. Interacting directly with farmers, rural communities and agricultural professionals gave participants a deeper understanding of how research can create impact.

Researcher Nani Gopal Das observed, *"One of the biggest lessons I learned is how to communicate my research to different stakeholders, including farmers and industry representatives."*

Researchers reported that these experiences encouraged them to think more deliberately about the relevance and application of their work.

Researcher Tiarna Scerri said, *"I loved the workshops that were about learning how to transform the data that you have on a page into real change for farmers... and moving forward, that's definitely one thing I will be using in my projects, implementing those ideas and principles from the outset, as opposed to at the end."*

Communication training, including elevator pitch development, helped participants explain complex scientific concepts clearly and confidently to a variety of audiences.

INDUSTRY CONNECTIONS SHAPING RESEARCH PATHWAYS

Participants were connected with industry stakeholders through the Southern NSW Innovation Hub's networks, creating opportunities to enhance the relevance and reach of their research.

These connections often led to valuable professional relationships. For example, Tiarna Scerri connected with the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) to explore aspects of her bovine mastitis research, while Nani Gopal Das was introduced to industry leaders whose work aligned with his research into heat stress mitigation in sheep and lambs.

The mentoring component was similarly influential. One researcher explained, *"My mentor provided practical guidance, shared personal career experiences and gave me constructive feedback that helped me improve my confidence and clarify my goals."*



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