

11 March 2024

## Regional forum works to engage people in positive change

Leaders and organisers of regional community, agriculture and environment groups are invited to attend the upcoming Advance NSW forum at Dubbo on Wednesday March 27<sup>th</sup>.

The forum is presented by the Southern NSW (SNSW) and Southern Queensland Northern NSW (SQNSW) Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs and follows a similar highly successful event hosted by the Southern NSW hub in 2023.

The theme for the 2024 forum will be ‘Engaging change for regional drought resilience’, and presentations will focus on the adoption of innovative techniques and strategies to strengthen engagement.

SNSW Hub Director Cindy Cassidy says the group engagement tools and techniques being offered at the forum will be useful in a wide range of group-based activities.

“While our main focus is clearly regional drought resilience, the techniques for engaging communities in issues that affect them and co-designing solutions for all stakeholders can be applied to almost any project or challenge,” she said.

“The added advantage of being part of Advance NSW is that forum attendees are also able to make contacts and build networks that are mutually supportive, to enable resilience across the whole region. “

“There is a natural focus on agriculture as the region’s economic driver, but the truths and insights of people-centred engagement are relevant for everyone.”

SQNSW Hub Director Professor The Hon. John McVeigh also endorsed the value of the forum.

“If you are serious about improving practices, inspiring change and embedding drought resilience in our regional communities, this forum is for you,” he said

The event will feature a variety of notable speakers across plenary presentations, smaller breakout sessions, plus interactive Q&A and ‘story harvest’ activities. The keynote address, ‘What really works when engaging farmers and communities?’ will be presented by farmer, industry commentator and ifarmwell Creative Director **John Gladigau** with Dubbo entrepreneur **Jillian Kilby**.

Additional plenary presentations will feature CSIRO Senior Indigenous Research Officer **Max Fabila** and agriculture industry consultant **Cam Nicholson**. There will also be interactive breakout sessions with the plenary speakers, professional group engagement consultants and extension specialists. Renowned facilitator Viv McWaters will host breakouts on how to bring engagement groups to life and lead a facilitated session to conclude the event.

The schedule also provides opportunities for socialising and networking among delegates, to discuss ideas and opportunities in relation to their individual and shared objectives.

“Forum attendees will leave Dubbo with at least 20 new tools to increase their capacity for creative, effective engagement in the community,” Ms. Cassidy said.

“Based on last year’s event, they will also leave with a wealth of valuable ideas, insights and contacts to help them co-design solutions for local challenges and create connections for regional resilience.

“We are looking forward to another exciting and energising forum, and I’d urge anyone with an interest in community engagement to join us.”

Advance NSW is free to attend with registration required for seating and catering purposes.

Those wishing to attend should register at:

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/advance-nsw-2024-forum-tickets-826219353327>

### **About the Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs**

The Southern NSW Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub based in Wagga Wagga and the Southern Queensland and Northern NSW (SQNNSW) Hub based in Toowoomba, are two of eight hubs established nationally through funding from the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund.

Southern NSW Hub partners are Charles Sturt University (hub lead), Farming Systems Groups Alliance, Local Land Services (LLS), NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI), Rural Aid, Australian National University (ANU) and University of Canberra (UC). The SQNNSW Hub is based at the University of Southern Queensland (hub lead) and partners with thirty-seven partner and member organisations.

Hub projects receive funding from the Australian Government's Federal Drought Fund.

### **ADVANCE NEW SOUTH WALES**

#### ***Engaging change for regional drought resilience***

Savannah Function Centre, Taronga Western Plains Zoo, Dubbo.

Wednesday 27 March 2024

ENDS

#### **More information:**

**Kylie Dunstan**, Communications and Engagement Manager,  
Southern NSW Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub ([SSNSW Innovation Hub](#))

e. [kydunstan@csu.edu.au](mailto:kydunstan@csu.edu.au)

p. 0417 437 922

**Erin Byles**, Media & Communications Manager

Southern QLD & Northern NSW Drought Resilience Adoption & Innovation Hub ([SQNNSW Innovation Hub](#))

e. [erin.byles@usq.edu.au](mailto:erin.byles@usq.edu.au)

p. 0409 900 490