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

Better management decisions flow from farm water planning

BACKGROUND

When farmers understand their on-farm water needs and capacity, they gain efficiency, productivity, and flexibility, building resilient businesses that make informed decisions, even in tough seasons.

Led by Murray Local Land Services (LLS), the Farm Water Management Planning project helps farmers assess water storage capacity, identify unique water needs, and create practical plans to improve water quality, protect soils and maintain livestock health.

DEMONSTRATION SITES LEAD THE WAY

The project's 10 demonstration sites across southern NSW showcase local examples, design options, and the benefits of water planning. These sites have been valuable for peer-to-peer learning, giving farmers real-life insights they can adopt on their own farms.

Landholders attend workshops and field days, visit demonstration sites, then complete farm water audits and develop personalised plans, finalised through one-on-one sessions with local project officers.

Jess Armstrong was a Community Engagement Officer at Holbrook Landcare Network, working with local groups to deliver the project. She noted many farmers don't realise how much water their farms actually need, especially during drought. The project's workshops, field days and support help bridge this knowledge gap.

PERSONAL SUPPORT TO UNDERSTAND FARM WATER

Jess believes the one-on-one support was especially valuable, beginning with a farm water audit that highlights factors like evaporation, seepage, and residual water.

She said, *"Then we have the opportunity to sit with them and develop a comprehensive farm water management plan, which incorporates the farm water audit, but also brings in what a farmer values in their system and what might be challenges during a drought."*

When you have a better appreciation for the water that you have on your farm, you can make better management decisions. So, not only are you better equipping yourself for a dry spell or when you are knee-deep in drought, but you've got a better understanding of how you can conserve your resources

JESS ARMSTRONG
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OFFICER
HOLBROOK LANDCARE NETWORK
December 2024

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KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Holbrook-based farmer Ian Locke runs Wirruna Poll Herefords stud and also has sheep on his 1,500-hectare 'Spring Valley' property, a demonstration site for the project. Ian wanted to help other farmers make better water management decisions — an issue he's long considered.

I signed up to monitor the site so that Holbrook Landcare can use that information and promote others to do similar works or improve the efficiency of their production systems by improving water quality. It is good to engage with other producers, we get so much benefit from each other by all openly looking at our systems.

IAN LOCKE
WIRRUNA POLL HEREFORDS | HOLBROOK

Even with healthy dams, tanks, and waterways, Ian stresses the need to conserve water for future dry times. Destocking due to water shortages would mean losing part of Wirruna Poll Herefords' 75-year breeding history.

MAKING CHANGES ON-FARM

In past droughts, Ian's cattle often cooled off in dams, spoiling their drinking supply. Understanding how water quality affects livestock performance, he made changes to protect his water supply during dry times.

Ian said, *"I've installed in this paddock and the paddocks around it, a tank which is fed from the solar bore, and it feeds a number of troughs, and we are now looking to control the quality of water."*

"By having troughs, we know that the quality of the water is what's coming out of the bore. Also, we might be able to even start medicating it, such as in a lucerne paddock, we might be able to put bloat oils in the water to control the risk of bloat."

Small changes implemented by Ian as a part of his farm water plan have made a big difference at Spring Valley.

STAY IN TOUCH

csu.edu.au/research/southern-nsw-drought-resilience-hub

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Future Drought Fund

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Farm Water Management Planning

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