

Joint Media Release



Australian Government

Hon Murray Watt

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Minister for Emergency Management



Hon Ros Spence MP

Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Community Sport
Minister for Carers and Volunteers

Friday, 13 October 2023

COMMUNITY PLANS TO BOLSTER REGIONAL DROUGHT RESILIENCE

Agricultural communities in regional Victoria will be in a stronger position to adapt to drought and climate change thanks to the Albanese and Allan Labor Governments' investment in drought resilience planning.

Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Murray Watt and Victorian Minister for Agriculture Ros Spence today announced the Drought Resilience Plans for the **Gippsland, Goulburn** and **Wimmera Southern Mallee** regions have been finalised.

These are the first of nine regional communities across the state to develop community-led *Regional Drought Resilience Plans* through the Future Drought Fund's Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program, jointly funded by the Albanese and Allan Governments.

A further six Plans will be developed and finalised in 2024 for the Barwon, Great South Coast, Central Highlands, Mallee, Loddon Campaspe, and Ovens Murray regions. An initial funding boost will be available to each region to help kick-start implementation of priority actions identified in their Drought Resilience Plans.

The Plans will be coordinated locally by Councils, and cover a range of areas including community wellbeing, resilient local businesses and economies, building skills and leadership, landscapes, and collaboration.

The **Goulburn Drought Resilience Plan** builds on recent experience of both dry seasonal conditions and major flooding to identify actions that support communities, and natural and built environments such as education programs to improve water use efficiency in irrigated agriculture, as well as programs to attract and retain young people in agriculture in the region.

Having been impacted by bushfires and extreme weather events in recent years, the **Gippsland Drought Resilience Plan** outlines actions such as whole farm planning and knowledge sharing between neighbours to set the region's agriculture sector and communities up for greater resilience in the face of climate risks.

Communities across the vast agricultural landscapes of the Wimmera Southern Mallee have seen many cycles of dry seasonal conditions and the **Wimmera Southern Mallee Drought Resilience Plan** includes actions to support the people and economy of the region such as better access to financial and business advice to support income diversification.

To access the Regional Drought Resilience Plans, along with a video showcasing the development of the Wimmera Southern Mallee Plan, visit: agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/farm-food-drought/drought/future-drought-fund/regional-drought-resilience-planning.

For more information on Victoria's Regional Drought Resilience Planning program visit: agriculture.vic.gov.au/futuredroughtfund.

Victorian farmers seeking drought support are encouraged to contact Agriculture Victoria by calling 136 186 or to email: drought.support@agriculture.vic.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Federal Minister for Agriculture Murray Watt

“With so many rural communities experiencing the impacts of extreme weather events in recent years and the possibility of an El Nino event on the horizon, it’s important we work together to support sustainable and resilient regions, ready for when the next drought hits.”

“Each region in Victoria is unique and so is each drought plan. Each community came together to share their experience and knowledge to build a plan with locally tailored actions to prepare for future droughts.

“The Future Drought Fund’s Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program is an coordinated partnership between Albanese Government and State and Territory Governments, enabling us to identify actions across all levels of government to better prepare our regional communities for drought.”

Quotes attributable to Victorian Minister for Agriculture Ros Spence

“The Regional Drought Resilience Plans are a testament to the collaborative work of community, industry and government who have shared their knowledge and expertise for the benefit of their region.”

“As drought and extreme weather conditions impact our state, the Regional Drought Resilience Plans will ensure our agricultural communities across Victoria are prepared and are still able to thrive.”

Quotes attributable to Mr Chris Sounness, CEO of Wimmera Southern Mallee Development, a key stakeholder in the development of the Wimmera Southern Mallee Plan:

“Often we try and tackle these issues in the middle of drought, which is actually possibly the most challenging time.”

“That’s why I’m so excited about this program, it’s actually doing the preparation work when we’ve got a chance to think about it, rather than under the pressure of trying to respond.”

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Minister Watt’s office: Tali Eley 0499 770 772

Minister Spence’s office: Alex Woods 0422 572 228