

# A BRIEF UPDATE ON THE VICTORIA DROUGHT RESILIENCE ADOPTION AND INNOVATION HUB

## KEY MESSAGES

- During 2023, four new Drought Hub projects kicked off including the *SCOUT* pilot program, *Non-chemical slug control*, and *Non-chemical weed control* pilot projects
- The Hub also made contributions to the Riverine Plains Ladies Luncheon, Youth in Agriculture events, the Riverine Plains Innovation Expo, as well as an ongoing investment into the Riverine Plains Livestock Officer position during 2023
- Several Hub projects were completed in 2023, including the *Community resilience* project, the *Renewable energy in agriculture feasibility study*, and the *Agriculture innovations program*.

## WHAT IS THE VICTORIA DROUGHT RESILIENCE ADOPTION INNOVATION HUB?

The Victoria Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub is an \$8 million program funded from the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund.

Running over four years, the Hub is a collaboration between Deakin, La Trobe, and Federation Universities, Agriculture Victoria, Riverine Plains, Southern Farming Systems, Birchip Cropping Groups, Food and Fibre Gippsland and the Mallee Research and Innovation Centre, with the University of Melbourne taking the lead at Hub HQ.

Riverine Plains is the "North East Node" partner for Victoria, representing the agricultural industry through consultation with farmers, councils, businesses, health organisations, and community groups in the region and helping to build drought resilience at a local level. This process has led to the development of pilot projects which address specific knowledge or technology gaps identified through the Hubs, as well as capacity building and the brokering of knowledge between partnering organisations.

Riverine Plains will continue as the "North East Node" partner for Victoria, with funding extended by the Future Drought Fund.



## COMPLETED HUB PROJECTS - OUTCOMES

The completion of several initiatives by Riverine Plains, coordinated through the Hub, has delivered significant benefits for the local region. In 2023, the *Farmer renewables opportunity* assessment project was completed, which explored key opportunities to support farmers and regional infrastructure transition to renewable energy, this project is being built on through the *Understanding the ROI of on-farm energy storage* project.

The *Containment feeding to boost business performance and resilience* project, which was also completed in 2024, aimed to build the capacity of advisors in farming systems groups across Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia. It did this by conducting group and online training on how to manage stock containment effectively, including when to implement it and how to begin the stock containment process. The project helped advisors increase their knowledge of the timing and mindset for using stock containment, allowed one-on-one follow-up with farmers, and built capacity by building a livestock network.

Additionally, Drought Hub funding contributed to capacity-building projects such as the Ladies Luncheon, the Youth In Ag program, and the Riverine Plains Innovation Expo, all of which saw sell-out crowds and provided valuable

information to a diverse and highly engaged audience. While the far-reaching impact of these events may not be immediately measurable, the ongoing popularity of these initiatives, combined with feedback regarding improvements in knowledge and networks, clearly demonstrates their success.

The ongoing funding of the Riverine Plains Livestock Officer role has resulted in five additional events being delivered in the Riverine Plains and surrounding regions, with feedback supporting the continuation of this position and an ongoing focus on livestock. This included the *Maximising utilisation of electronic identification tags to better inform livestock management decisions* project, delivered through the Hub's Agtech Innovation program which delivered a field day, webinar, and several publications, including a decision support tool and product guides.

In 2024, new projects will be delivered to support farmers to build resilience and preparedness for future droughts and changing weather conditions.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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