






# National Drought Forum



Tuesday **26 September 2023** | Rockhampton, **Queensland**

## SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

### Session 1: Preparing for drought, the next steps

8 – 11 am, Gardner Lounge

Photo	Name, title, organisation	Bio	Topic
	Oli Le Lievre, Founder and CEO, Humans of Agriculture	<p>Oli Le Lievre is the Founder and CEO of Humans of Agriculture, a storytelling platform that is looking to shift the narrative and stigma around agriculture and create a sense of community from farm to fork and beyond.</p> <p>As a kid that grew up in Sydney, Oli had a love of farming from an early age, and it was the obvious choice upon leaving school that he would become a jackaroo.</p> <p>After completing an Agribusiness degree at Marcus Oldham, his professional experience has included a variety of roles and sector across Agriculture in Australia and Canada. Including roles in Fresh Produce Export, Business Development Manager in an AgTech Start-up, Corporate Food &amp; Agribusiness Advisory, and Brand and Marketing roles in a leading Agribusiness.</p> <p>Oli believes that agriculture is key to shaping a world for our Children's children that is happier, healthier and more prosperous and through storytelling is on the pursuit to connect the broader community to agriculture, empower people within the sector through their own story and provide opportunities to attract and retain the next generation in agriculture.</p>	Welcome and housekeeping (EMCEE)
	Senator the Hon Murray Watt	<p>Murray Watt was elected as a Senator for Queensland in 2016. He is the Albanese Government's Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Minister for Emergency Management.</p> <p>Murray is Brisbane born and bred, and has strong family ties to regional Queensland, with both sides of his family having a long history in farming and teaching.</p> <p>For over 20 years, Murray's working life has been spent as an advocate for others, as a lawyer, a public servant and as Chief of Staff to former Premier Anna Bligh. Murray also served one term as a Queensland State MP and Assistant Minister in health and economic portfolios.</p> <p>Since his election in 2016, Murray played a key role in Senate Estimates and a range of Senate Committees including the Rural and Regional Affairs Committee. As a Senator and Shadow Minister, he led a number of Senate inquiries into issues including regional development, energy and resources, emergency management and health care.</p> <p>Murray and his wife Cynthia have two children who are both keen soccer players and he gets to as many games as he can!</p>	Minister's opening address
	Tony Mahar, Chief Executive Officer, National Farmers' Federation	<p>Tony Mahar is the Chief Executive Officer of the National Farmers' Federation – the peak industry body for Australia's farm sector, and one of the country's most respected advocacy organisations. Originally from a farming background in southwestern Victoria and having worked in and around agriculture for the majority of his working life, Tony is a passionate executive leader committed to supporting Australian industry.</p> <p>As CEO of the NFF, Tony has driven the creation of the industry's 2030 Roadmap – a long term strategy to grow agricultural output to \$100 billion by 2030 – which now forms part of the agriculture policies of both major parties. Prior to joining the NFF, Tony held roles at the Australian Food and Grocery Council and Commonwealth Department of Agriculture spanning sustainability, global trade and industry policy.</p>	Keynote Address and Farmer Wellbeing Survey

	<p>Matthew Coulton, General Manager Agriculture and Water, Senior Responsible Officer NSW, Bureau of Meteorology</p>	<p>Tony holds a Bachelor in Agricultural Commerce from the University of Sydney, a Masters of Business – Industry Policy from the Australian National University and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.</p>	<p>Climate update</p>
	<p>Mel Brown, First Assistant Secretary – Farm Resilience Division, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</p>	<p>Mel Brown is the First Assistant Secretary of the Farm Resilience Division, which works alongside government, non-government and industry stakeholders to provide strategic policy advice and support to building resilience in Australian agricultural communities, including, but not limited to drought. This role includes overseeing the development of drought policy and the administration of the \$400m Future Drought Fund, through innovation and adoption.</p> <p>Mel was born and bred on a cattle and sheep farm in the Snowy Mountains. She left school and went straight into working on the family farm, this was followed up with joining the APS. Her career has spanned across many portfolios including environment, biosecurity, emergency response, international relations, agriculture, forestry and fisheries.</p> <p>Mel has over 31 years’ experience in the Australian Public Service and is passionate about true stakeholder engagement and building strong and trusted relationships.</p>	<p>Welcome and Introduction</p>

## Session 2: Panel discussions

11 – 1:30 pm, Gardner Lounge, Phillips & McHugh Lounges





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	Leanne Rudd, Director of The Money Edge - Agribusiness Accountants & Advisors and Certified Practicing Accountant	<p>Leanne is a Non-Executive Director and financial professional with over two decades of board level experience across the private and not-for-profit sectors with experience in taxation, business advisory, wealth advisory, leadership, governance, management consulting and financial management. She has a Bachelor of Business (Accounting), is a Fellow of CPA Australia, a Financial Planner and AICD Graduate.</p> <p>She chairs the Board of Impact Community Services and is on the Board of Rural Financial Counselling Service Southern Queensland. In 2022 she was selected to be a participant in the Diversity in Leadership program with National Farmers Federation.</p> <p>Leanne is founder of The Money Edge, an agribusiness, accounting, and financial advice firm located in Bundaberg. Her professional experience has been in public practice for 30 years, helping regional and rural businesses grow and continue to be sustainable.</p> <p>Leanne grew up on a beef grazing property near Eidsvold in the North Burnett.</p> <p>Bringing together her long-term passion for agriculture and her business experience, Leanne is focused on the future of the agriculture industry, improving outcomes, efficiencies and helping organisations work collaboratively to be the best they can be.</p>	<p>Con-current session 1: Money Talks</p> <p>An interactive Q&amp;A panel discussion on how we can help farmers build financial resilience and what is getting in their way</p> <p>(PANEL MEMBER)</p>
	Andrew Smith, Head of Agribusiness Development, Rural Bank	<p>Andrew Smith is Head of Agribusiness Development for Rural Bank, with 35 years of experience in agribusiness and commercial finance. Andrew started his career with the Rural Finance Corporation of Victoria as a Cadet Valuer before working as an Agribusiness Relationship Manager and then Regional Manager in Gippsland.</p> <p>Andrew then spent 12 years with Westpac in a range of commercial and agribusiness banking, strategy and leadership roles in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. Andrew re-joined Rural Finance in 2010 and following its purchase by Bendigo and Adelaide Bank, Andrew moved onto the Rural Bank executive as General Manager Agribusiness. After a stint heading up Business Banking for Bendigo, Andrew returned to Rural Bank in 2020 as Head of Sales and more recently was appointed as Head of Agribusiness development leading our Agri Insights, Partnerships and Local Market Activation teams.</p> <p>Andrew is a key spokesperson for the Bank in rural media and industry affairs Andrew holds a Bachelor of Applied Science (Agriculture) and a Bachelor of Business (Property), and is a graduate of the Australian Rural Leadership Program and a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.</p>	<p>Con-current session 1: Money Talks</p> <p>An interactive Q&amp;A panel discussion on how we can help farmers build financial resilience and what is getting in their way</p> <p>(PANEL MEMBER)</p>
	Angie Bowden, Rural Financial Counsellor, Rural Financial Counselling Service Southern QLD	<p>Angie Bowden is a Rural Financial Counsellor, based in Charleville, Southwest Queensland. Angie works with service provider, Rural Solutions Queensland, supporting primary producers in Bulloo, Murweh, Paroo, Quilpie and Blackall-Tambo areas, an area of 211 000 sq km.</p> <p>Angie commenced as a Rural Financial Counsellor in 2010 following the millennium drought. She works with beef, sheep and wool producers providing support and options to sustain their businesses through the adversities of drought, bushfires, floods and to adapt, change or retire from the industry in the long term. With extensive experience in the Rural Financial Counselling role, Angie has in-depth knowledge of the various drought programs as well as farm business planning, farm debt mediation and negotiation.</p> <p>She is an accredited member of Financial Counsellors Association of Queensland and holds a Bachelor of Business, Diploma of Community Services (Financial Counselling) and various certificates including Mental Health First Aid and Negotiation. Angie is a graduate of the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation's Drought Resilient Leaders Program and was named a Paul Harris Fellow by Rotary International in recognition of her exemplary work in community service and helping those in need.</p>	<p>Con-current session 1: Money Talks</p> <p>An interactive Q&amp;A panel discussion on how we can help farmers build financial resilience and what is getting in their way</p> <p>(PANEL MEMBER)</p>
	Ardie Lord, Owner-Operator, Pastoral Co.	<p>I grew up in North-West Queensland on a cattle &amp; sheep station and bought the neighbouring station, Sutherland, at an early age. My wife Kacie, and I are owners in two businesses; Lord Pastoral - a family owned and operated beef cattle business and Lord &amp; Penna - a partnership business with my brother James and his wife Marjorie, and Linda and Gerard Penna, a couple who worked for us in the late 90s and were seeking the opportunity to get skin in the game.</p> <p>We've survived, thrived and for over 40 years have loved building our businesses together, raising 3 capable and confident children amid it all.</p> <p>My passion is managing the land and producing productive animals whilst driving the strategic side of building and growing a business.</p> <p>In this next phase of my life, I want to use my experience and failures to help guide the next generation run and grow successful business, be it on the land or elsewhere.</p>	<p>Con-current session 1: Money Talks</p> <p>An interactive Q&amp;A panel discussion on how we can help farmers build financial resilience and what is getting in their way</p> <p>(PANEL MEMBER)</p>





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		<p>I enjoy my position on the Rabobank Client Council where we are enhancing rural communities and industry through 5 key charters: Industry Capacity, Environmental Sustainability, Rural Urban Divide, Rural Health and Adaptation Disruption.</p> <p>I also enjoy a role as a mentor in the ABL program (Australian beef leadership).</p> <p>I thoroughly enjoy working with our 3 children on their individual businesses and when the stresses all get too much, I revert to sitting behind a mob of cows for stress relief.</p>	
	<p>Bron Christensen, Chair of National Farmers' Federation Economics Committee</p>	<p>With the Dawson River running through her blood, Bron is a fourth generation Theodore, Central Queensland grazier. Bron returned to Theodore in 2001 to purchase and operate a beef breeding enterprise with her husband. She has a background in agriculture, rural health, business and project management. She holds a Bachelor of Business and a Diploma of Science (Agriculture), is a graduate of the Australian Rural Leadership Program (ARLP), the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD), the MLA Red Meat Ambassador Program, and is currently one of 12 participants in the NFF Leadership in Diversity program. Through her company, Green Cow Communications, Bron contracts to The Leucaena Network as their Executive Officer, is Secretariat for the North Australian Beef Research Council (NABRC) and Company Secretary for Theodore Water Pty Ltd. However she will soon relinquish these roles to take up the position as CEO of the Kimberley Pilbara Cattlemen's Association (KPCA). Bron is passionate about the sustainability of Australia's northern agricultural industry and its rural communities.</p>	<p>Con-current session 1: Money Talks</p> <p>An interactive Q&amp;A panel discussion on how we can help farmers build financial resilience and what is getting in their way</p> <p>(SESSION CHAIR)</p>
	<p>Nina O'Brien, Disaster Resilience and Recovery Lead, Foundation for Rural Regional Renewal</p>	<p>Nina leads the Disaster Resilience &amp; Recovery team at the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) in Australia; a portfolio of granting and place-based development programs delivered across remote, rural, and regional Australia. During 2021/22 FRRR supported nearly 1000 community projects across Australia, over which 60% of which were related to climate related impacts and drought preparedness.</p> <p>Based in regional New South Wales on Yorta Yorta Country (Moama) on the Dhungala River and having experienced both floods last October, and significant drought periods prior to that in her local region, Nina works both at a strategic national and practical local level to build capability in communities in meeting the challenges of managing future climates.</p> <p>FRRR have been instrumental in delivering the \$18 million Tackling Tough Times Together Program, the \$4.5 million Future Drought Fund's Networks to6Build Drought Resilience Program and now leading the \$29.6 million investment in the Future Drought Fund's Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative that builds capacity and capability of people and grass roots regional communities to prepare for drought in partnership with the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation.</p>	<p>Con-current session 2: Not the usual suspects</p> <p>Featuring presentations and Q&amp;A style discussion on how we can include and engage the whole community to drive action from the ground up to prepare for, manage through and recover from drought.</p> <p>(SESSION CHAIR)</p>
	<p>Melanie Shannon, Barfield Producers Group</p>	<p>Melanie and her husband Alastair own and operate beef cattle breeding and backgrounding properties in Central Queensland. With a focus on regenerative grazing principles, they use time-controlled grazing to build resilience in their landscape. Through her facilitation of the Barfield Road Producer Group, Melanie enjoys the benefits of not only seeing her own business succeed but recognises the importance of having many businesses actively engaged allowing for an effective peer to peer learning structure. The positive flow on effects are clear: a thriving and productive community. Recently, Melanie has enjoyed watching the group's vision evolve to include the health and wellbeing of the members.</p>	<p>Con-current session 2: Not the usual suspects</p> <p>Featuring presentations and Q&amp;A style discussion on how we can include and engage the whole community to drive action from the ground up to prepare for, manage through and recover from drought.</p> <p>(SPEAKER)</p>
	<p>Melinee Leather, Barfield Producers Group</p>	<p>Melinee has worked in the beef industry for over 30 years, currently a partner in a family owned and operated sustainable beef business in Central Queensland. Leather Cattle Co (LCC) has a deep sense of responsibility of how they contribute to global food security and climate action. She is also a founding member of the Barfield Road Producer Group (BRPG) and an appointed Member of Central Queensland Regional Community Forum.</p> <p>Melinee received an Australian Biosecurity Award in 2019 and was named Farm Biosecurity Producer of the Year, highlighting her contribution to maintaining Australia's biosecurity integrity, and her strong advocacy for agriculture. This year Leather Cattle Co has been named as a finalist in the 34th National Banksia Sustainability Awards in the SME Sustainable Leadership category for their commitment to lead by example in the sustainable production of beef through excellence in environmental stewardship, animal management and increased productivity.</p> <p>One important learning over the 34 years LCC has been operating is to focus on the things you can control and learn to manage the things you can't. The business has endured many droughts, floods, fires, market access impacts and high interest rates as well as the COVID pandemic and like many others has drawn on the strength of family and community to get through these challenges. Preparedness is vital and the family ensures they have management plans and strategies to not only survive these challenges but thrive and grow through them.</p>	<p>Con-current session 2: Not the usual suspects</p> <p>Featuring presentations and Q&amp;A style discussion on how we can include and engage the whole community to drive action from the ground up to prepare for, manage through and recover from drought.</p> <p>(SPEAKER)</p>






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	Daniel Willson, RDA Yorke and Mid North	Daniel is currently Chief Executive Officer of RDA Yorke and Mid North, based in the cereal belt of South Australia. He is a professional economist with deep experience across place-based economics, infrastructure, energy and public policy, having worked as a consulting economist and economic adviser to governments, infrastructure firms, public sector agencies and financiers for more than 10 years. Daniel brings a unique combination of economic tools and concepts together with commercial and policy advisory experience to help policy makers work with communities and proponents to develop contemporary solutions for solving complex problems and seizing opportunities.	Con-current session 2: Not the usual suspects Featuring presentations and Q&A style discussion on how we can include and engage the whole community to drive action from the ground up to prepare for, manage through and recover from drought. (SPEAKER)
	Ben Fee, RDA Murraylands & Riverland Inc. South Australia	Ben Fee has been Chief Executive of RDAMR since October 2019, leading the organisation and supporting aspects of the region through some of the most complex and challenging times in living memory. Ben has evolved his approach to supporting regional development through knowledge and experience gained from roles in State Government, running an advisory consultancy on the food-energy-water nexus, presenting at international conferences and various national and state conferences, managing of a quarter-of-a-billion dollar grants program, commencing a PhD in resources economics on policy implementation and, most significantly, during his time learning how to 'do it better' with the RDAMR team of staff and Board members. Over the past three years, Ben has led RDAMR in working more closely with community and industry and in clarifying its purpose 'to connect our region for a resilient and sustainable future'. Ben's background in systems ecology has focused the work of RDAMR with government partners (eight regional Councils, State and Federal) on transformational systems change that is resilient and sustainable. This focus has seen RDAMR connecting more deeply with communities and businesses and developing a stronger sense of self-direction that is evidence-based and founded on robust and transparent knowledge sharing.	Con-current session 2: Not the usual suspects Featuring presentations and Q&A style discussion on how we can include and engage the whole community to drive action from the ground up to prepare for, manage through and recover from drought. (SPEAKER)
	Georgie Somerset, Red Earth Community Foundation	Georgie Somerset AM is a rural industry leader and strategist with a background in regional development across Australia. Based on her family's cattle property in Queensland's South Burnett, she juggles the demands of primary production alongside her roles in many influential organisations. Georgie is General President of AgForce Queensland, Deputy Chair of the Royal Flying Doctor Service Qld, a director of the National Farmers Federation, the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation as well as Chair of the Red Earth Community Foundation. She is passionate about her involvement in agriculture and rural communities and works to support change, build resilience and maximise opportunities for the future.	Con-current session 2: Not the usual suspects Featuring presentations and Q&A style discussion on how we can include and engage the whole community to drive action from the ground up to prepare for, manage through and recover from drought. (SPEAKER)
	Suzanne Thompson, Australian Native Food & Botanicals	Suzanne was born and raised in Barcaldine. Her custodial connection to country has been continuous and carries on the work of her father the late David Thompson, Great Grandparents David and Clara, all of which had traditional custodial links to the lands of the Kunngerri/Iningai & Bidjera peoples. Suzanne has returned to country after two decades of working within Government agencies and private business enterprises. For the most part she worked in the areas of: Youth and policy Development, Community Development, Indigenous Business Advisor; Volunteering commitments - Board Member of the Queensland Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Legal Services Board, Noosa Bio Sphere Board, Committee Member for the Desert Uplands Committee (Landholders), founding member of Yumbangu Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and Tourism Development Aboriginal Corporation. Suzanne is the National Co-Chair for the Statement from the Heart Working Group. She owns and manages her own gallery and also runs with her husband a very successful 'Wood Fired Pizza' business called the 'Lounging Emu' in Barcaldine. Suzanne sees these enterprises as a key opportunity to share the stories of her ancestral knowledge and practices to the tourist and locals. Suzanne has also teamed up with land owners of the district to work in partnership to further develop relationships with both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous. She is passionate about the opportunities that both cultures can create into the future as new industries for outback communities. Her passions have seen her embrace the sharing of local Native food & medicine plants throughout the Region.	Con-current session 2: Not the usual suspects Featuring presentations and Q&A style discussion on how we can include and engage the whole community to drive action from the ground up to prepare for, manage through and recover from drought. (SPEAKER)
	Natasha Johnston, Drought Angels	Natasha Johnston, Qld Local Hero in 2021, is the visionary Founder and Director of Drought Angels, a remarkable Not-For-Profit organisation that stands as a steadfast support system for primary producers across Australia in their times of adversity caused by natural disasters like drought, flood, fire, and mouse plagues. In 2014, amidst Australia's record-breaking drought, Natasha embarked on her journey with Drought Angels. Witnessing the relentless grip of the drought on her own rural community, she sprang into action. Her initiative began humbly, setting up a wheelie bin outside her local IGA supermarket. This simple act ignited a widespread movement, rallying countless Australians eager to stand by their fellow farmers. These collective endeavours have now generated more than \$23 million, a resounding testament to	Con-current session 2: Not the usual suspects Featuring presentations and Q&A style discussion on how we can include and engage the whole community to drive action from the ground up to prepare for, manage through and recover from drought. (PANEL MEMBER)

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		<p>Natasha's resolute dedication in assisting Australian farmers and their families Under her steadfast guidance, Drought Angels has flourished. Over 4833 farming families across 1371 rural Australian communities have been touched by the organisation's outreach, a number that continues to rise. Natasha's leadership has infused the initiative with an unwavering spirit, propelling it to new heights of impact and influence. With each passing day, the reach of Drought Angels grows, amplifying its commitment to rural communities and their enduring strength in the face of adversity.</p> <p>She has not only alleviated financial strains but has also contributed to diminishing depression and suicide rates among farmers. Natasha's involvement remains hands-on, with an unwavering commitment to ensuring that "no farmer will go without food on their table while I have food on mine." As a beacon of hope and a catalyst for change, Natasha Johnston's legacy is entwined with rejuvenating the Australian farming industry and nurturing the resilience of those who tend its lands. Her life's work stands as a testament to the transformative power of empathy and community-driven action.</p>	
	<p>Dr Raylene Ward, Knowledge Broker First Nations Engagement, Southern Queensland &amp; Northern NSW Drought Resilience Adoption &amp; Innovation Hub, Future Drought Fund</p>	<p>Raelene is a proud Aboriginal Kunja woman and traditional owner of Cunnamulla and surrounding areas on her late Grandfathers side Albert McKellar and her late Grandmother Hazel McKellar is a Kooma woman from southwest Queensland. Raelene has been employed at UniSQ as a research fellow and Senior Academic in the School of Nursing and Midwifery and more recently as the Knowledge Broker First Nations Engagement in the Southern Queensland Northern New South Wales (SQNNSW) Hub.</p> <p>Raelene leads engagement and research that is First Nations led and community driven aligning to her role in the Hub. As she takes on this role, she will advocate for First Nations People and right holders ensuring their perspectives, knowledge and participation are integrated by leading knowledge sharing around drought responses, resistance/adaptation to drought and the impact of drought on the social and emotional wellbeing of First Nations people and Traditional Owner groups.</p> <p>Raelene has an extensive network establishing longstanding, meaningful and effective relationships with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and is highly respected in the community-controlled health sector, organisations providing advocacy and leadership.</p>	<p>Con-current session 2: Not the usual suspects</p> <p>Featuring presentations and Q&amp;A style discussion on how we can include and engage the whole community to drive action from the ground up to prepare for, manage through and recover from drought.</p> <p>(PANEL MEMBER)</p>
	<p>Ross Blanch, Lifeline Counsellor</p>	<p>Ross is a dairy farmer from the Rosewood area in Queensland who has spent his entire life in farming, including dairy farming, stud beef cattle and broad acre crops.</p> <p>On top of this, he has also spent the last 30 years helping his community as a Lifeline phone crisis support worker. In recent years, when drought became really crippling in his community and farmers were struggling with no feed, water shortages and stock that was worth little, Lifeline suggested a phone line dedicated to farmers.</p> <p>The Farmer to a Lifeline Farmer started in November 2019 and Ross heeded the call.</p> <p>Since then, Ross has answered over 1000 phone calls and visits to farms in need. Ross continues to work in this role and is available on the phone 24 hours a day.</p>	<p>Con-current session 2: Not the usual suspects</p> <p>Featuring presentations and Q&amp;A style discussion on how we can include and engage the whole community to drive action from the ground up to prepare for, manage through and recover from drought.</p> <p>(PANEL MEMBER)</p>
	<p>Sarah Parker, 2022 Rural Community Leader of the Year</p>	<p>Sarah Parker is Chair of the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, Australian Women in Agriculture, and Australian Dairy Collective. Sarah has represented Australian agriculture at the United Nations and participated in the 2023 National Farmers' Federation French Farmer Delegation and Engagement Tour.</p> <p>She has experience in executive and management roles in agriculture, extension and research, community development and education.</p> <p>In 2022, Sarah was recognised as the Rural Community Leader of the Year. Sarah is actively involved as a member of the Victorian Farmers Federations Farm Business Committee and the NFF Social Policy and Telecommunications Committee.</p> <p>Sarah Parker holds a Master of Agriculture and Rural Development. She is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, the National Farmers Federation Diversity in Agricultural Leadership Program, the Victorian Climate Smart Agriculture Fellowship Program, and the International Dairy Management Program.</p> <p>Sarah and her husband, Raymond, own and operate an irrigated dairy farm milking stud Illawarra Cattle with genetics exported to the USA, UK, New Zealand, and Europe. They have invested heavily in irrigation upgrades, effluent reuse, genetics and cow monitoring devices.</p> <p>Sarah values a sustainable future for agriculture and the environment and is enthusiastic about the community and the next generation becoming more involved in natural resource management.</p>	<p>Con-current session 2: Not the usual suspects</p> <p>Featuring presentations and Q&amp;A style discussion on how we can include and engage the whole community to drive action from the ground up to prepare for, manage through and recover from drought.</p> <p>(PANEL MEMBER)</p>




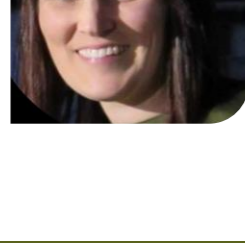





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	<p>Joshua Gilbert, PhD Candidate, Charles Sturt University</p>	<p>Joshua Gilbert is a Worimi man who lives and works on country. Josh is a Senior Researcher at the UTS Jumbunna Institute of Indigenous Education and Research and is completing his PhD at Charles Sturt University, focusing on the post-colonial involvement of Indigenous peoples in Western agricultural systems. He was recently recognised internationally for his work, announced in the inaugural 50 Next: People Shaping the Future of Gastronomy cohort. Josh is on the board for Indigenous Business Australia, the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office, KU Children's Services and the Australian Conservation Foundation and is the Aboriginal Co-Chair of Reconciliation NSW.</p>	<p>Panel 3: Decision Time Featuring presentations and Q&amp;A style discussion on supporting better decision-making by farmers, communities and governments, before, during and after drought. (SESSION CHAIR)</p>
	<p>Kristie Lisle, Owner-Operator, Lisle Holdings Pty Ltd</p>	<p>Kristie Lisle is a Central Queensland grazier and a proud owner-operator of a beef trading business at 'Moonkan Park', Bushley with her husband (Matt) and two young children (Jack, 6 &amp; Ella, 4). Kristie's primary role within their operation is maintaining the financial and administration components of their business, operating their local school bus service and caring for their two young children.</p> <p>Although these are her main responsibilities, her passion of working within the beef industry also leads her into other various aspects of their operation. Kristie is a 2022 graduate of the Advanced Beef Leaders Program, holds a Diploma of Agribusiness Management and a qualified Bookkeeper with over 11years financial and administration experience throughout mining, labour hire and agriculture industries.</p> <p>From a community involvement perspective, Kristie takes great pride in being involved with local committees such as the CQ Carcase Classic Competition (Secretary 2018-2021 / 2021-Current Member &amp; Social Media Coordinator) Stanwell State School P&amp;C (Secretary 2022-Current) and Marlborough Show Society (Secretary 2013-2018).</p>	<p>Panel 3: Decision Time Featuring presentations and Q&amp;A style discussion on supporting better decision-making by farmers, communities and governments, before, during and after drought. (SPEAKER)</p>
	<p>Elizabeth Johnston, Major Programs Director – Water and Agriculture, Bureau of Meteorology</p>	<p>Elizabeth joined the Bureau of Meteorology recently as the Major Programs Director, Water and Agriculture and leads projects providing climate, weather and water information to inform decision making for the water and agriculture sectors. Elizabeth has over a decade experience working in senior positions in the Victorian Government, including developing the strategic direction for the management of water in Victoria in response to a range of climate factors, including drought and floods, while bringing together the interests of a range of stakeholders, and supporting agricultural productivity. Through this work, Elizabeth strives to promote consideration of aspirations and cultural knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a respectful way. Ms Johnston holds a Master of Environment (2013), a Master of Business Administration, which she completed in 2022 and post graduate qualifications in Project Management.</p>	<p>Panel 3: Decision Time Featuring presentations and Q&amp;A style discussion on supporting better decision-making by farmers, communities and governments, before, during and after drought. (SPEAKER)</p>
	<p>Dr Yiheyis Maru, Principal Systems Research Scientist, Team leader - Adaptation Pathways and Social Transition, CSIRO</p>	<p>Dr Yiheyis Taddele Maru is a principal Systems research scientist and the team leader at CSIRO in Canberra, Australia. He worked as a veterinarian before joining CSIRO in 2002 and led vaccination programs, including on cattle plague (rinderpest).</p> <p>He has a postgraduate diploma in rural and natural systems management and a PhD in integrative systems research, modelling and practice from the University of Queensland. His research focuses on understanding social-ecological system traps, conducting linked resilience-vulnerability assessments and developing resilience, adaptation and transformation pathway for sustainability in developing and developed countries.</p> <p>His current research includes producer-led partnerships for transforming animal health biosecurity, review and policy advice for regional drought resilience plans and exploring agricultural adaptation limits and options for transformation across Australia.</p>	<p>Panel 3: Decision Time Featuring presentations and Q&amp;A style discussion on supporting better decision-making by farmers, communities and governments, before, during and after drought. (SPEAKER)</p>
	<p>Neal Hughes, Senior Economist, Farm Data and Analysis, ABARES</p>	<p>Dr Neal Hughes is a Senior Economist at ABARES, and an adjunct associate professor at Deakin University. Neal has over 15 years of experience as a research economist at ABARES, with a focus on water policy in the Murray-Darling Basin and the effects of drought and climate change on Australian farms. Neal is a former Sir Roland Wilson Scholar, and in 2021 Neal received the ANU Ian Castles Alumni Prize for his outstanding contributions to public policy in Australia.</p>	<p>Panel 3: Decision Time Featuring presentations and Q&amp;A style discussion on supporting better decision-making by farmers, communities and governments, before, during and after drought. (SPEAKER)</p>

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	Courtney Bryant, Assistant Secretary – Drought Policy Branch, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	<p>Courtney Bryant leads the Drought Policy Branch in the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. The Branch is responsible for providing whole-of-government coordination and advice on matters relating to drought policy and strategic communication.</p> <p>In her role as Assistant Secretary, Courtney leads collaboration with government and non-government stakeholders to shape the future of drought policy, focussing on strategic policy and partnerships while building on learnings from past droughts.</p> <p>During her career Courtney has worked in public sector communications, policy development and program implementation in areas such as veterans’ affairs, renewable energy, human services, forestry and farmer support. Courtney has tertiary qualifications in communications and marketing communications and started her career as a regional journalist. Courtney is from Bathurst NSW and is passionate about policy that understands the needs of communities.</p>	<p>Panel 3: Decision Time</p> <p>Featuring presentations and Q&amp;A style discussion on supporting better decision-making by farmers, communities and governments, before, during and after drought.</p> <p>(PANEL MEMBER)</p>
	Pip Job, Director of Industry Engagement, NSW Department of Primary Industries	<p>Pip is the Director of Industry Engagement at the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and leads a diverse range of programs that focus on building preparedness, and supporting primary producers impacted by drought, bushfires, floods, COVID-19 and biosecurity threats.</p> <p>Pip served as the NSW Government State Drought Coordinator in 2018, a role which she was awarded a Public Service Medal. Pip has had a strong focus on business and social resilience since completing a bursary study as part of winning the 2014 National Rural Women’s Award; skills which she utilised whilst in the State Drought Coordinator role and brings to her current work with the DPI.</p> <p>Pip’s career has stretched across beef cattle production, sustainable agriculture within Landcare, and industry resilience within Government.</p>	<p>Panel 3: Decision Time</p> <p>Featuring presentations and Q&amp;A style discussion on supporting better decision-making by farmers, communities and governments, before, during and after drought.</p> <p>(PANEL MEMBER)</p>
	Natalie Hughes, Rural Financial Counsellor, Townsville, Burdekin and Northwest Queensland	<p>Natalie Hughes, an ardent advocate for rural Australia, is a Rural Financial Counsellor and Program Lead for Rural Financial Counselling Service North Queensland’s (rfcsnq.com.au) Farm Business Resilience program. RFCSNQ is a program proudly administered by the Remote Area Planning and Development Board (www.rapad.com.au).</p> <p>A fifth-generation farmer, prior to becoming a counsellor, Natalie spent a decade teaching secondary students before turning her focus to economics and post-graduate research into environmental legislation’s effect on farmers’ attitudes, beliefs, and actions towards natural resource management.</p> <p>Natalie has contributed to national disaster recovery and drought policies through her various roles, is presently Deputy Chair of a natural resource management board, and in 2022 was awarded a High Commendation for the QLD Agricultural Minister’s Emerging Leader Award.</p>	<p>Panel 3: Decision Time</p> <p>Featuring presentations and Q&amp;A style discussion on supporting better decision-making by farmers, communities and governments, before, during and after drought.</p> <p>(PANEL MEMBER)</p>
	John Warters, CEO, Rural Aid	<p>John was appointed chief executive officer in February 2020 having previously led Fairfax Media’s national agricultural business and being integral in the transformation and modernisation of its regional media assets in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Northern NSW. Previously, John was the editor and then general manager of iconic agricultural masthead Queensland Country Life. Throughout his media career John always championed the “bush” and agitated for a fair go for primary producers and their families. He has deep connections across the Australian agribusiness sector and a genuine affinity with rural and regional communities.</p>	<p>Panel 3: Decision Time</p> <p>Featuring presentations and Q&amp;A style discussion on supporting better decision-making by farmers, communities and governments, before, during and after drought.</p> <p>(PANEL MEMBER)</p>

## Session 3: Workshops

**11:55 am – 1 pm, Gardner, Phillips & McHugh Lounges**





*All three workshops are interactive with activities and group discussion*

Workshop1: Back to the Future	Getting the priorities right for preparedness programs in the next 4-year plan for the Future Drought Fund.
Workshop 2: What helps and what hinders	What should guide Australian Government decisions in response to drought?
Workshop 3: Who, what, why and when?	How can we use information flow to build better connectedness?



## Session 4: Drought in the climate context and Forum close

3:30 pm – 5 pm, Gardner Lounge

Photo	Name, title, organisation	Bio	Topic
	Tony Mahar, Chief Executive Officer, National Farmers' Federation	<p>Tony Mahar is the Chief Executive Officer of the National Farmers' Federation – the peak industry body for Australia's farm sector, and one of the country's most respected advocacy organisations. Originally from a farming background in southwestern Victoria and having worked in and around agriculture for the majority of his working life, Tony is a passionate executive leader committed to supporting Australian industry.</p> <p>As CEO of the NFF, Tony has driven the creation of the industry's 2030 Roadmap – a long term strategy to grow agricultural output to \$100 billion by 2030 – which now forms part of the agriculture policies of both major parties. Prior to joining the NFF, Tony held roles at the Australian Food and Grocery Council and Commonwealth Department of Agriculture spanning sustainability, global trade and industry policy.</p> <p>Tony holds a Bachelor in Agricultural Commerce from the University of Sydney, a Masters of Business – Industry Policy from the Australian National University and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.</p>	Drought in a changing climate: preparing producers (SPEAKER)
	Dan Rea, Climate Mate, Fitzroy Basin Association	<p>Dan has comprehensive experience in environment management skills and enjoys keeping up with and applying the latest science developments in the sector. He is a skilled partnership coordinator and collaborator responsible for identifying and leveraging the skills, expertise, and assets of stakeholder organisations that Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA) works with.</p> <p>Dan is also FBA's resident Climate Mate, selected for his knowledge of the industry and capacity to network and communicate with producers. He also coordinates drought resilience activities and opportunities for land managers under FBA's role as the Fitzroy node for the Tropical North Queensland Drought Hub.</p>	Drought in a changing climate: preparing producers (SPEAKER)
	Nadia Bouhafs, Assistant Secretary, Climate Policy, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Agriculture Land and Sector Plan	<p>Nadia Bouhafs leads the Climate Branch in the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. The branch provides advice to government on climate policy in agriculture and works with numerous stakeholders on portfolio issues relating to Australia's climate goals and changing environment.</p> <p>Prior to her work in the climate space, Nadia was Australia's Agriculture Counsellor based in Japan where she focused on increasing market access opportunities for the sector and building Australia's relationship with a significant trading partner.</p> <p>Nadia worked in public relations and advertising before joining the Commonwealth government where she has worked on issues spanning biosecurity, mining and land access, climate change research and trade. Nadia has a Bachelor of Arts (International Studies) and a Masters in Environmental Law.</p>	Drought in a changing climate: preparing producers (SPEAKER)
	Caitlin McConnel, Senior Associate, Clayton Utz	<p>Caitlin is a Senior Associate in the Agriculture &amp; Food and Natural Capital Markets Teams at Clayton Utz, working across practice groups nationally in relation to the role agriculture plays in respect of natural capital markets, ESG investment opportunities &amp; risk, and agrivoltaics. Caitlin specialises in agriculture &amp; food legislation, water law, food security policy and frameworks, and climate-related litigation.</p> <p>Caitlin has a Master of Laws from the University of Melbourne specialising in issues pertaining to agriculture, particularly the role climate change, food, and water security plays in the context of national security in Australia. Her research paper considering the Water Act 2000 (Cth) in the context of 'critical human water needs' was published and is now used by the Melbourne Law School as teaching material. In 2022 she was an inaugural recipient of the Farmers for Climate Action Climate-Smart Farming Scholarship which focussed on carbon neutral agriculture including the calculation of methane emissions on farm and throughout the value chain, and climate adaptation methods.</p> <p>In conjunction with her role at Clayton Utz, Caitlin is recognised as a young leader and top agribusiness professional in Australia, and is an advocate for youth in agriculture, and mental health &amp; wellness in the legal and agricultural sectors. She is a sixth-generation farmer who oversees the day-to-day management of her family property with her parents (beef, agrivoltaics &amp; agritourism) in SEQ, and is also Chair of the Future Farmers Network, and a Member of the National Farmers' Federation Farm Data Code Certification Panel, the National Farmers' Federation Young Farmers' Council, the Queensland Law Society Water &amp; Agribusiness Law Committee, and the Agribusiness Australia Queensland State Council.</p>	Drought in a changing climate: preparing producers (SPEAKER)



Natalie Sommerville, President & SA Director, Australian Women in Agriculture

Nat Sommerville lives and works on Ngadjuri Country in South Australia’s Mid North. She is the current President of Australian Women in Agriculture. She is also a farmer, mother, mentor and Wagadagam descendant of Mabuyag Island of the Torres Strait, providing a cultural lens to all that she does. Nat specialises in sustainable agriculture, natural resource management and First Nations engagement.



Melinee Leather, Barfield Producers Group

Melinee has worked in the beef industry for over 30 years, currently a partner in a family owned and operated sustainable beef business in Central Queensland. Leather Cattle Co (LCC) has a deep sense of responsibility of how they contribute to global food security and climate action. She is also a founding member of the Barfield Road Producer Group (BRPG) and an appointed Member of Central Queensland Regional Community Forum.

Melinee received an Australian Biosecurity Award in 2019 and was named Farm Biosecurity Producer of the Year, highlighting her contribution to maintaining Australia’s biosecurity integrity, and her strong advocacy for agriculture. This year Leather Cattle Co has been named as a finalist in the 34th National Banksia Sustainability Awards in the SME Sustainable Leadership category for their commitment to lead by example in the sustainable production of beef through excellence in environmental stewardship, animal management and increased productivity.

One important learning over the 34 years LCC has been operating is to focus on the things you can control and learn to manage the things you can’t. The business has endured many droughts, floods, fires, market access impacts and high interest rates as well as the COVID pandemic and like many others has drawn on the strength of family and community to get through these challenges. Preparedness is vital and the family ensures they have management plans and strategies to not only survive these challenges but thrive and grow through them.

Drought in a changing climate: preparing producers  
(PANEL MEMBER)



Melissa Brown, First Assistant Secretary – Farm Resilience Division, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Mel Brown is the First Assistant Secretary of the Farm Resilience Division, which works alongside government, non-government and industry stakeholders to provide strategic policy advice and support to building resilience in Australian agricultural communities, including, but not limited to drought. This role includes overseeing the development of drought policy and the administration of the \$400m Future Drought Fund, through innovation and adoption.

Mel was born and bred on a cattle and sheep farm in the Snowy Mountains. She left school and went straight into working on the family farm, this was followed up with joining the APS. Her career has spanned across many portfolios including environment, biosecurity, emergency response, international relations, agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

Mel has over 31 years’ experience in the Australian Public Service and is passionate about true stakeholder engagement and building strong and trusted relationships.

Forum Close and Communique  
(SPEAKER)