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Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry



Future
Drought
Fund



University of
Southern
Queensland



vibrant regions, thriving communities

SQNNNSW Innovation Hub Newsletter #33 - APRIL

Maranoa Ag Innovation Expo Inspires

What an event! The Hub was thrilled to host this incredible day, arranged by Roma Node Manager Lorinda Otto with support from Host Partner [Southern Queensland Landscapes](#), [Toowoomba & Surat Basin Enterprise \(TSBE\)](#), [Maranoa Regional Council](#) and [Santos](#), to present the inaugural Maranoa Ag Innovation Expo in Roma on 17 April. This event provided a focus on innovations in agriculture, covering grain, beef, sheep, and goat production, in addition to farming and grazing systems. Over one hundred ag enthusiasts gathered from as far as Rockhampton, Longreach, and Canberra, to learn from industry experts and successful producers who shared their experiences and insights.

The expo and its prelude, the industry networking dinner, both prompted positive discussions and new ideas around ag innovation, with overwhelming positive feedback from attendees. Event organiser and the Hub Roma Node Manager, Lorinda Otto, said she felt proud of how well the event ran. "The speakers and trade exhibitors certainly hit the mark covering a variety of topics and interests relevant to the theme of the event". Hub Director, Prof The Hon John McVeigh, noted that the hub looks forward to building on this event in the future.

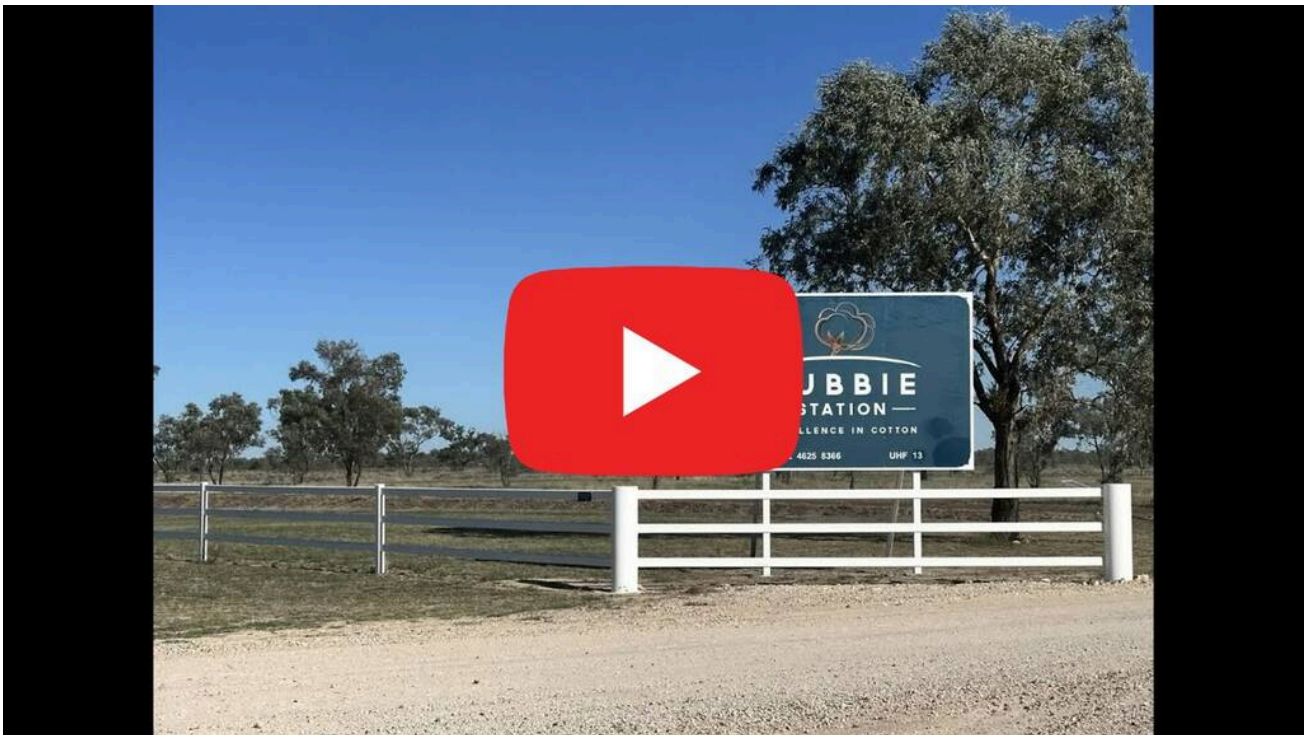
This event received funding from the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund (FDF), which helps Australian farmers and communities prepare for drought, including through the innovations and techniques showcased. Events such as this are an excellent opportunity for regional communities to come together to share learnings on drought resilience.



Connecting with St George Community and a Firsthand Experience of Cubbie Station

A contingent of the Hub team recently returned from a visit to St George and Cubbie Station, Queensland. The team connected with producers and a diverse range of industry experts at the Balonne Council Chambers in St George, hosting a discussion around dam evaporation and seepage, climate outlook, Pimelea updates, bankless channel irrigation, grant opportunities and farming technologies.

We also travelled to [Cubbie Station](#), where we were joined by members of the Hub's Next Generation committee, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry's Hub Director and a small group of researchers. It provided an excellent firsthand opportunity to learn about Cubbie's construction, water extraction, allocations, and usage, and leave with a greater understanding of the largest privately owned irrigated cotton farm in the southern hemisphere.



Some notable learnings:

- Cubbie Station has been designed to harvest water within its environmental and regulatory obligations and store irrigation water on the farm in extremely efficient water storage infrastructure.
- Only a share of any river flow is harvested, ensuring flows continue downstream. Harvested water is stored efficiently using deep storages that reduce evaporation, making more water available for irrigation.
- All irrigation and storm water discharge is recycled, ensuring there is no topsoil or nutrient discharge to rivers of the Murray Darling Basin.
- Cubbie Station's irrigation infrastructure is protected by levees which have been assessed and comply with the Lower Balonne Floodplain Management Plan. This provides surety to Cubbie's investments.
- Cubbie properties can produce more than 250,000 bales of cotton in full production as well as a variety of irrigated agriculture including wheat, sorghum, sunflowers, barley, chickpeas, and corn.
- More than 40% of Cubbie Station is either remnant or advanced regrowth vegetation. Rivers, wetlands, and floodways represent key aquatic attributes on Cubbie.
- Data guides all Cubbie's own decision making and how it engages more broadly with society.
- Cubbie manages social license through a number of initiatives, one of which involves a voluntary contribution: up to 10GL will be contributed to the Culgoa River and Lower Balonne intersecting streams through a reduction of up to 50% in permitted offtake during critical periods, increasing the volume of water in the river system to enhance flow length, replenishment of fish waterholes, fish connectivity, and persistence, as well as aiding downstream communities.

A sincere thank you to Paul Brimblecombe, Cubbie Station CEO, and his team, for generously sharing their knowledge and allowing us to experience a firsthand look at, and leave with a greater understanding of, Cubbie's operations.

Win a Comprehensive Soil Assessment on your Property – valued at \$5,000!

Are you a Primary Producer who owns, manages, or cares for agricultural land in the southern half of Queensland or the northern half of New South Wales? Building on the success of the 2023 competition, the Hub will again be offering an opportunity to win a comprehensive soil assessment on your property (worth \$5,000)! Three equal prizes are available, and you can enter via social media or email. The competition will run from 5 October to 5 December 2023.

[View Terms and Conditions.](#)



WIN! A comprehensive Soil Assessment on your property – valued at \$5,000

Are you a Primary Producer who owns, manages or cares for agricultural land in the southern half of QLD or northern half of NSW?

Hear from 2023 winners!

"We are grateful for this opportunity to help build a resilient landscape and explore our knowledge of soil"
~ Randal Breen, Echo Valley Farm, Goomburra Qld

"If we can get some more data around what our soil looks like, it will help us with our decision-making"
~ Justine Maunder, Pallamallawa NSW

How to enter

Create a social media post (X, Facebook or LinkedIn) OR Email sqnswhub@unisq.edu.au

- Include your name, location & type of enterprise
- Highlight the importance of soil health in managing drought & showcase examples of practices to improve soil health.
- Tag @SQNSWHub and include hashtags #drought and #soil (applicable to social media posts)

Competition runs 5 October to 5 December 2024

Total prize pool of \$15,000!

3 prizes each worth \$5,000:

- A site visit by SQNSW Innovation Hub's Regional Soil Coordinator (a Registered Soil Practitioner)
- Collection of soil cores at four sites within the property
- Laboratory analysis of samples at an ASPAC accredited laboratory.
- Result interpretation in the form of a soil condition report.

More information

View Terms & Conditions at www.unisq.edu.au/research/sqnswhub/wscd-2024
Email: sqnswhub@unisq.edu.au

Hub Partners with UniSQ to support Future Ag Leaders

Enabling students to acquire a variety of skills used in agriculture to equip them to be better future leaders in ag – this is the key goal of the University of Southern Queensland's April residential school for students studying Farm Safety and Operations 2.

The Hub is proud to be supporting these students to use current ag tech equipment to ensure that a practical real-world learning experience is provided. "The Hub is thrilled to be partnering with UniSQ to allow students to undertake hands-on activities working with a range of specialist drones using thermal and multi-spectral imaging for data collection and spraying applications", said Hub Manager, Leia Grimsey.



Building Resilience into the Future | Longreach QLD



The Hub was fortunate to support the recent Grass Growers Ball in Longreach, an opportunity to celebrate the primary production industry, connect with community (over 140 attendees!) and build resilience into the future.

A highlight of the evening was the stunning Outback Chandelier, gracefully suspended over the dance floor, a fitting reminder of connection to the land and the spirit of the outback (pictured right).

Funds were raised for Outback Futures through a charity auction, making a meaningful contribution to support mental health services in remote and

Hub provides agricultural insights at Rural Press Club | Toowoomba QLD

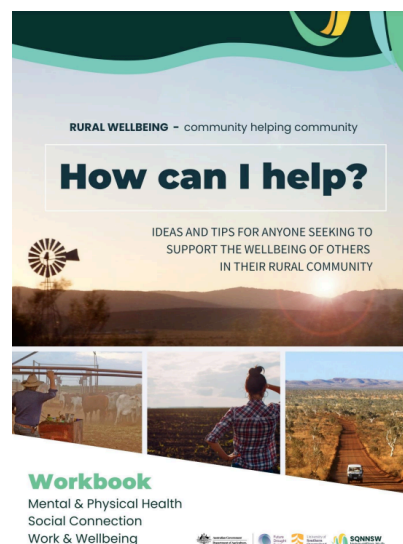
Hub Director, Prof John McVeigh, and Hub Innovator, Dr Jennifer Luke, participated in a Q & A panel (as part of our research project) examining issues of importance to the region's agricultural community, including updates on the latest drought resilience research from the Hub. Through the Rural Press Club hosted annual breakfasts for the Toowoomba agribusiness community in conjunction with the former AgShow field days for several years, this event was particularly significant, being held in the Garden City for the first time in eight years.



Wellbeing and Employment Interventions in Rural Australia

Congratulations to the Hub's former Research Fellow (Wellbeing & Employability), Dr Jennifer Luke, (and [University of Southern Queensland](#) collaborators Professor Sonja March, Professor Peter McIlveen and Dr Cristy Bartlett) for recently publishing '[A systematic review of effective local, community or peer-delivered interventions to improve wellbeing and employment in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia](#)'.

This work is a great accompaniment to the [Rural Wellbeing Toolkit](#) released by the Hub in late 2023 - a FREE-to-download workbook (including case studies, activities, and a directory of support services) & online companion site.



Coming up

Wellbeing Workshop
Stanthorpe, 9 May 2024

Southern Downs Soil & Water Expo
Stanthorpe, 31 May 2024



Explore strategies for personal growth & discover ways to support those around us. Learn more about:

- Insights into personal resilience and fostering supportive communities
- Recognizing signs of stress
- Navigating challenges
- What to do when you recognize the signs

[Register here >>](#)



Learn about Sustainable practices, soil hydration & land condition. With free breakout sessions covering topics such as pest and weed management, weather and climate, Sustainable and profitable systems, and more. Attendees will have a chance to receive individual support for property mapping, fire planning and management, pest and weeds and other pertinent issues.

[Register here >>](#)

Grants & Opportunities

2025 Nuffield Australia Drought Resilience Scholarships

Want to travel overseas and bring home new drought resilience tools and practices from international leaders in the field?

The Future Drought Fund and Nuffield Australia are partnering again in 2025 to offer up to 5 Aussie farmers overseas study scholarships in drought resilience.



Through a Nuffield Drought Resilience Scholarship, you'll build your drought resilience knowledge and grow your industry and community's capacity to deal with dry times.

Each scholarship is valued at \$40,000. If you work in a food or fibre industry and are aged between 28 and 45, apply now.

Applications close **on 31 May 2024**.

[Find out more & apply >>](#)

A Targeted Call for Research (TCR): Climate-related health and improving outcomes (January to June 2024)

A one-time request for grant applications designed to stimulate research in a particular area that will benefit the health of Australians or address a specific health issue.

Extraordinary Disaster Assistance Recovery Grants

Grants of up to \$75,000 are available for affected producers following the Southern Queensland Fires, 8 September - 7 November 2023, to hire or purchase equipment and materials, clean up, remove debris, replace fencing and other costs associated with the recovery process. Producers

should take photographs of the direct damage to accompany their application/s.

Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative – Small Network Grants

Available to community organisations in regional and rural Australia to develop and deliver one-off events or initiatives to strengthen community networks and capabilities that build drought preparedness.

Rebates to Improve Digital Connectivity for Farmers

Provides eligible Equipment Suppliers with up to \$30,000 rebate for sales of digital farming technology to eligible Primary Producers to help improve their connectivity and productivity.

Events calendar

*This calendar includes events from the Hub, its Members and Partners and Supporters, and events supported by the Australian Government. Please contact organisers for more information. Events in **bold** are organised or supported by the SQNNNSW Innovation Hub, or include a Hub speaker.*

May

- **1 May to 26 June - FREE Sit and Stretch Classes, Manilla NSW (every Wednesday)**
(phone 0429 647 928)
- **2 May - 27 June – FREE Sit and Stretch Classes, Bingara NSW (every Thursday)**
(phone 0429 647 928)
- 5-11 May - [Beef Australia 2024](#), Rockhampton QLD
- **9 May - [Wellbeing Workshop](#), Stanthorpe QLD**
- 9 May - [Startup Stories Young Farmer Business Program](#), Deepwater NSW
- 9-10 May – [Business EDGE](#), Armidale NSW
- **14 May - 25 June – FREE Sit and Stretch Classes, Barraba NSW (every Tuesday)**
(phone 0429 647 928)
- 15 May - [Building Better Biodiversity on Solar Farms](#), Glen Innes NSW
- 17 May - [Another Day, Another Disaster: Driving New Ways to Improve Resilience for a Thriving Environment Breakfast Networking Event](#), Toowoomba QLD
- 21, 22, 23 May - [Calculating Carbon](#), Glen Innes, Guyra, Walcha NSW
- **24 May – [Farmer First Aid](#), Barcaldine QLD**
- 29 May – 4 June - [Farming & Grazing For Profit](#), Dubbo NSW
- 29 May – ‘Much Rain Mate?’ Breakfast Event, Goondiwindi QLD
- **31 May – [Soil & Water Expo](#), Stanthorpe QLD**

June

- 3-4 June - [Business EDGE Workshop, Longreach](#) QLD
- 4-6 June - [FarmFest Field Days, Kingsthorpe Park](#) (near Toowoomba) QLD
- 6-7 June - [Business EDGE Workshop, Cunnamulla](#) QLD
- 12-18 June - [Farming & Grazing for Profit](#), Toowoomba QLD
- 18-20 June - [Business Fundamentals Workshop](#), Brisbane QLD, early bird saving ends 18 May
- 20 June – [Harvest Her Potential](#), Moree NSW

July

- 23-24 July - [NSW Farmers' Conference](#), Rosehill NSW

August

- 14-20 August – [Grazing For Profit](#), Roma QLD, early bird saving ends 14 June

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The SQNNNSW Innovation Hub receives funding from the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund.