

Improving farm water for livestock and biodiversity



Program guidelines

An incentive program to assist landholders improve the water quality of farm dams and other water bodies which are regularly used by livestock on their farm.

This program is supported by Murray Local Land Services, through funding from the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Water and the Environment



Future
Drought
Fund



Local Land
Services

We help secure the future of agriculture and the environment for NSW communities.

www.lls.nsw.gov.au

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1. About the program

Murray Local Land Services received funding through the Australian Governments Future Drought Fund – Landscape Resilience program for delivery of this program.

A component of the project will be to offer financial incentives to landholders to undertake on-ground works on their properties.

2. Project Description

The objective of the '*Improving Farm Water for Livestock and Biodiversity*' incentives program is to assist landholders implement works which contribute to improved water quality and security outcomes for the benefit of biodiversity and livestock production resilience. The total funding on offer is relatively small, and this program aims to act much like a 'pilot' program, to provide guidance for potential similar programs into the future.

Project sites will focus on farm dams or other contained water bodies (not streams, rivers, channels etc). Works may include exclusion or restriction of stock access, establishment of alternative watering points or hardened access points, improvement of native vegetation, installation of structure for habitat, sediment control measures and incorporation of innovative approaches that can be reasonably expected to contribute to the program objectives.

Maximum incentive funding available is \$10,000 (ex GST) per project. Applicants are entitled to apply for one (1) project per business entity.

Incentives will be allocated through a competitive application process assessed against various criteria. The application process and anticipated timeframes are detailed in the table below:

Project Stage	Anticipated Timing
Grant rounds opens	13 September 2021
Closing date for applications	8 October 2021
Acknowledgement of application	15 October 2021
Assessment of applications (including site visits)	8 November 2021
Offers made to successful applicants	12 November 2021
Contracts executed	26 November 2021
Works Completed	10 June 2022

3. What can I apply for?

Eligible activities and expenses

The table below details the eligible activities and the level of funding that applies to them under this program. Total funding available is up to \$10,000 (ex GST) per project.

Eligible activities	Items included	Funding available
Fencing	Fencing materials	Full cost of materials up to \$8 per lineal metre.
Alternative watering points	Water troughs, water tanks, pipes, pumps, (including solar pumps and associated required infrastructure) and associated hardware such as valves, joiners etc	Up to a maximum of \$5,000/project.
Revegetation	Plants (including trees, shrubs and grasses) and consumables associated with planting (including stakes and guards), and direct seeding (including seed and seeding costs) of species that are indigenous to the locality of the project site.	100% of the cost of materials and seeding costs, including contract planting costs up to \$1 per plant
Hardened access points	Earthworks, materials and contractor costs associated with the construction of hardened access points, including gravel, rock, and access infrastructure.	Up to a maximum of \$5,000/project.
Remote monitoring devices	Sensors used for the remote and/or constant monitoring of water levels in tanks, troughs etc	Up to a maximum of \$4,000/project.
Other	Other activities or items that Murray Local Land Services deem integral to successful implementation of an individual project. Such examples may include sedimentation traps, erosion control structures etc	Up to a maximum of \$5,000/project

All funded projects must comply with Australian Standards (including installation) where required by regulation.

Installations must comply with the manufacturer's instructions and use licensed tradespeople when required by legislation, council regulation or the manufacturer's instructions. This is the responsibility of the farm business. Murray Local Land Services is not liable in any way in relation to or in connection with the Eligible Project, other than as expressed in the Guidelines.

Ineligible activities and expenses

The following activities are not eligible for funding under this program:

- Site preparation costs
- Computers / laptops / servers / smartphones
- Projects, activities, or purchases already undertaken prior to written approval-in-principle of the grant application
- Labour costs associated with construction of fences
- Construction of boundary fences
- On-going operating expenses or other 'business as usual' expenses (including salaries; council rates; utility costs – water, electricity, gas; advertising and social media marketing; operational wage-related costs; online costs – such as ongoing internet connectivity costs, website domain names and hosting).
- Fees associated with permits for planning or certification
- Buildings and/or support structures
- Ongoing or routine maintenance costs
- Costs associated with applying for government grants, funding programs and approvals
- Any (land) clearing which may be required

- The purchase, lease or acquisition of land
- Purchase of livestock, motorised vehicles, water or its transport
- Irrigation infrastructure, including new or upgraded bores
- Enlarging, deepening or construction of new water bodies
- Project management, administration, accounting, legal or insurance costs

This list is not exhaustive, and grant recipients will have identified in their grant contracts what items are eligible to receive an incentive.

Budget

The budget is a very important aspect to every project application as it is where the assessors get a very detailed understanding of the proposed activities. It is also used to determine how cost effective the project is.

The budget should outline the requested funding from Murray Local Land Services and outline any in-kind contribution from the applicant (such as your labour, time, materials, maintenance etc). There is no requirement for applicants to include any in-kind contribution, however, such contributions will be highly rated as part of the assessment process.

- all budget figures must be GST exclusive.
- money allocated to projects will be based upon the submitted budget and no allowances will be made for price increases.
- monitoring and on-going weed control are ineligible costs.

Please seek assistance from Murray LLS if you are unsure, as the project budget is critical to the approval of the project.

4. Project and applicant eligibility

1. All project activities must directly contribute to the intent of the project funding which is to *'assist landholders implement works which contribute to improved water quality and security outcomes for the benefit of biodiversity and livestock production resilience'*. Projects that are primarily focused on aesthetics, improving irrigation infrastructure or recreational assets (for example) will not be considered.
2. Projects must occur on a holding larger than 10 ha and must take place on land within the Murray LLS region.
3. Applicants must be the owner of the land where the project will take place, or must have written authority from the landowner authorising their ability to commit to the project on the landowners behalf.
4. All previous works funded by Local Land Services on the applicant's property must be completed or maintained as per any current management agreement.
5. State, Federal and Local government authorities, bodies, departments, statutory corporations, state-owned corporations and other similar entities, and land owned by such entities, will not be eligible for this program (including crown leases).
6. Applicants must:
 - a. have no outstanding debts to Local Land Services
 - b. be willing to enter into a written agreement with Local Land Services and undertake certain works in accordance with set specifications and agreed timeframes
 - c. be an Australian citizen,
 - d. be registered for tax purposes in Australia and have an Australian bank account,

- e. be willing to declare any conflicts of interest when submitting an application. Persons who have associations that are considered by Local Land Services to represent a conflict of interest which cannot be managed will not be eligible,
 - f. have public liability insurance for a minimum of \$20 million,
 - g. abide by and implement as required all Local, State, and Federal Government laws, regulations, and Acts as they are relevant to an individual project, and
 - h. be able to complete all on-ground activities by 10th June 2022.
7. Applications must contain a fully completed application form and a map or sketch of the proposed site.
 8. Any water body that is the subject of this incentive program must be able to store water for a full 12-month period based on median rainfall for the area where the site is located.
 9. Project sites must be no smaller than 0.5ha in total.

5. Conflict of interest

Local Land Services staff and board members are required to identify and declare conflicts of interest so that they can be managed in an open and transparent way. This policy extends to external parties or individuals who may be associated with Local Land Services staff or Local Land Services board members through immediate family relationships, close friendships or business relationships. Should a conflict be identified, a conflict of interest declaration form will be provided to the applicant to complete.

6. Conditions of funding

If your application is successful, the following conditions of funding will apply:

- you must formally commit to undertaking your project by entering into a Funding Agreement with Murray Local Land Services
- you must not commence your project until you have signed a contract with Local Land Services
- the term of the funding agreement will be for a period of 10 years
- a maximum of \$10,000 (ex GST) per property will apply
- payment of up to 75% of the requested grant amount upon the execution of a compliant contract with Murray Local Land Services. The remainder of the grant funds will be provided upon successful completion of works and a final inspection conducted by a Local Land Services staff member of the contracted works
- if the works are deemed unsatisfactory, the final payment may be withheld, funds recovery action may be taken and restrictions on future funding may occur. Appropriate measures to remedy the issue will be discussed
- all contracted works must be completed by 10 June, 2022. Note that an inspection will be carried out by Murray Local Land Services staff to verify the successful completion of the project
- variations to the funding agreement must be requested in writing to the project manager and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis
- you must agree to allow Murray Local Land Services to publish information about you and your project on our website, Facebook page and other communication channels and products as required by Murray Local Land Services
- you must provide fully compliant Tax Invoices, Receipts and/or bank statements confirming your project expenditure
- if your project is funded you will be required to undertake basic monitoring of your project's environmental outcomes for 10 years, such as photo point monitoring. This monitoring information will assist Local Land Services to assess project and applicant successes and is necessary to justify future funding rounds

- you may be requested to complete a survey or review following the successful completion of contracted works
- you may be requested to complete and submit a follow-up survey or project review ten years following the completion of contracted works.

It is recommended that you do not apply for funding if you are unable to meet these conditions.

7. Project Standards

To be eligible to participate in this program, certain minimum standards are to be applied to aspects of projects.

Fencing Standards

All fencing supported by this project will be constructed using new materials. The preferred materials and construction methodology is as follows:

- No barbed wire is to be used
- Minimum of 7 lines of high tensile plain wires or a combination of plain wires and 7/90/30 hinged joint
- Maximum line post spacing of 5 metres apart
- Site must contain at least one permanent gate for site access, minimum 12 feet wide
- End assemblies are to be appropriate to soil type
- Electrified wires may be used, but fence must be stock proof without the power on, in case of electrical failure

Variations to this standard may be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, in all circumstances, the fencing must be permanent, wildlife friendly and stock proof.

Any clearing of native vegetation deemed necessary for the construction of the fence line must be to the minimum extent necessary and be undertaken in accordance with allowable activities under the Local Land Services Act 2013.

The landowner will be responsible for maintaining all new and existing fences, which enclose the project site, in a stock proof condition for the duration of the agreement. The site may be subject to checks from time-to-time to ensure the fencing is stock proof.

Fencing under this project must be an average distance of 20 metres or greater away from the dam edge (high waterline) and no new fencing can be less than 10 metres away from the dam edge (high water mark) at any point. If the dam is on a slope, the minimum fencing margin at the inflow point (upstream from the dam edge) is 25 metres.

Stock Water Supply

Reticulated Water Systems

Contributions to the establishment of reticulation water systems will be considered where fencing excludes livestock from a dam which serves as a current permanent water source. Landholders can apply for support in providing alternative water access points to the immediate paddocks that are affected by the dam exclusion, provided they currently own livestock that are accessing this water source.

Landholders must ensure any reticulated water supply installed under this program has sufficient capacity and capability to meet the consumption requirements of livestock using the system. It is recommended landholders consult with industry professionals to ensure the system is appropriately designed and constructed. Systems should be capable of meeting the peak demand in the middle of summer and account for all livestock types that may be watering off the system (refer to NSW DPI for further information).

All waterpoint infrastructure must be permanent.

All materials purchased must conform with appropriate Australian Standards.

Polypipe used within proposed systems should be designed for the specific site, considering the slope and potential water pressure.

All pipelines must be buried at recommended depths.

All stock water works must comply with all legislative and regulatory requirements, including but not limited to, the Local Land Services Act 2013 (NSW), the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 and Water Management Act 2000 (NSW)

Hardened Access Points

Contributions towards the establishment of a hardened access point will be considered for projects where stock are not fully excluded. Full exclusion through fencing and set up of a water reticulation system is preferable. However, partial access via hardened access point will be considered by the project committee with explanation for its preference and achievable method for installing.

The location of the access point is not to be on the spillway, dam wall or main inflow areas.

Fencing must be designed in such a way that gates can fully exclude stock from the hardened access point at any point in time.

Materials that can be considered for funding include: the likes of gravel or rock to establish the hardened base, additional fencing materials to extend into the dam and additional gates.

Designs need to consider the dams seasonal low point and a practical method of retro fitting.

Dams/groundtanks

Only dams or groundtanks, wetlands or lagoons existing at the time of grant application will be considered for incentive funding.

Existing water bodies may be enlarged / de-silted at the landowners expense and contribute to the projects in-kind contribution.

Any dam enlargement works must be carried out by a suitably qualified person and must meet the requirements of the Farm Dams Harvestable Right Policy and approved / licenced when necessary.

Vegetation

The landholder will be responsible for preparation of the site for revegetation.

The landholder will source and plant seedlings and/or direct seed using native species suited to the location and landscape at each site.

Plants selected should be local native species, with different species selected for the various zones that are located within the planting site (e.g. wet and bogging areas such as main inflow and spillway, fringing zones and dry areas).

Trees and large shrubs are not to be planted on the dam wall (if there is one), within 15 metres of the base of the dam wall (to ensure structural integrity of the dam wall isn't compromised) or on the spill way. Lower growing species such as native grasses, sedges and rushes may be grown on the wall.

If using tree guards, biodegradable tree guards are preferable.

Landholders will be responsible for ensuring invasive pests, weeds and wildlife are controlled within the project site.

Grazing Management

The landowner will exclude livestock grazing from each site for a minimum period of four (4) years after planting or seeding to allow for enhancement works and natural regeneration of native species to establish.

Following the 4-year exclusion, grazing of the site is permitted under certain conditions and is to be managed solely to enhance the quality of native vegetation, soil and water.

Grazing must not occur at any time between the months of November to January when native plants are setting seed (most native grasses, saltbushes, wattles, forbs and herbs set seed in late spring and summer).

Grazing should not exceed four two-week periods in any one year.

Grazing must not occur if the site is waterlogged, this prevents pugging and compaction of the soil.

Supplementary feed must not be brought into the project site as this can introduce weeds into the site.

Should the landholder identify a significant risk to the site (such as increased fire risk, incursion of weedy species), grazing may be permitted after consulting a representative of Murray LLS.

8. Assessment and notification process

In general terms, applications will be assessed on whether they align with desired outcomes of the program, provide public benefit, deliver long-term outcomes and represent good value for money.

Specifically:

1. Assessment will be undertaken by the Project Officer in relation to the eligibility criteria.
2. An Evaluation Panel will be convened and will assess projects deemed to meet the eligibility criteria. The Evaluation Panel will comprise two (2) Murray Local Land Services staff and one (1) independent panel member with relevant expertise in the field.
3. The Evaluation Panel will assess projects according to the Evaluation Criteria and rank them in order of highest to lowest. The Evaluation Criteria will be based on:
 - *The scale of the project and the water body, the connectivity of the site to existing native vegetation and other water bodies, the expected improvements in water quality and biodiversity, value for money, the type of work(s) being proposed and the location of the proposed project.*
4. Applications will then be offered funding in ranked order until the allocated funding is expended
5. Successful applications will receive a site visit to confirm site and project details and produce an accurate map of the project site to be used in the Management Agreement.
6. Where an on-site assessment is undertaken, and there is found to be significant variation between information provided during the application process and data collected on-site, Murray Local Land Services reserves the right to review the project ranking for that project. Any changes to the assessment will be based on advice from the Murray LLS staff member completing the site assessment and will require the Evaluation Panel to review such projects.
7. Any applications that meet the assessment criteria but do not receive funding due to higher ranked applications exhausting the available funding, will be placed on a second round offer list in order of ranking. If further funding becomes available offers may then be allocated in order of that ranking by the panel using the same principles/process as outlined in this plan.
8. Any disputes over eligibility or ranking will be resolved by the Evaluation Panel.
9. The program aims to ensure some geographical spread of projects across the Murray LLS region so projects can act as local demonstrations to encourage adoption of improved practices. Murray LLS will reserve the right to review application rankings to achieve a spread of projects accordingly.

If this is required it will be undertaken to the minimum extent necessary to achieve this spread. The aim is not to achieve an even spread of projects across the Murray LLS region, however, the program aims to provide as much geographical diversity as possible, without compromising on the quality or expected outcomes of individual projects and the program in general.

10. In the event the program does not receive sufficient eligible applications to achieve the outcomes required, MLLS reserve the right to make direct approaches to landholders or community groups to help identify projects that would contribute to the program outcomes. Any projects that are developed in this way will be subject to the same funding conditions and expectations of those projects developed through the open call process.

Contracts will be offered to eligible project proponents until program funds are exhausted. All works will be funded through a standard contract linked to the application. The contract will require ongoing maintenance of the works for a 10 year period and the submission of (basic) monitoring and evaluation information, such as the provision of photo point monitoring.

Once a fully executed contract is received by Murray Local Land Services, up to 75% of the maximum grant application will be provided to the applicant to be spent on works and activities related to the project. A minimum of 25% of the total funding will be retained until the project is fully implemented to the satisfaction of Murray Local Land Services. Landholders will be required to provide evidence (via a compliant Tax Invoice and Receipt) of all expenditures related to the project and provide documentary evidence of (any) in-kind contribution(s).

9. Application feedback

If your application is not successful, you will receive notification. Landholders may seek feedback about why it was not supported by contacting Mrs Melinda Ritchie – Land Services Officer on 02 6051 2200..

10. How your information is used

The information you provide to Murray Local Land Services in your application will be stored and used in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988.

By signing the funding agreement, you provide consent for Murray Local Land Services to use this information to communicate to the public about the program. This may include publishing communication articles on our website, Facebook page and other communication channels and products, as required.

11. Aboriginal Cultural Heritage assessment

It is the responsibility of the Local Land Services and the landholder to ensure due diligence takes place with respect to Aboriginal cultural heritage values. If the application is successful, a site assessment may be required, with the clear intent to protect cultural heritage.

12. Compliance with existing State and Commonwealth Legislation

Local Land Services only approves the amount of funding for your project. This does not authorise you to implement the project. You must ensure that your project has all necessary approvals, licenses, permits, consents, etc. and that your project complies with all relevant legislation.

13. How to submit your application

If you believe that your project fits the criteria, you can lodge an application form, found on our website. Alternatively, contact Murray Local Land Services to receive an email or hard copy application which will be mailed to interested landholders upon request.

Application forms will be assessed if they are received or post-marked by 5 pm on Friday 8th October, 2021. You will receive an acknowledgement to confirm receipt of your application form. Email your application form to: farmwater.murray@lls.nsw.gov.au

Alternatively, you can post your application form to: Murray Local Land Services, Farm Water Project Application, PO Box 797, Albury, NSW 2640.

Late applications may be received, however, will not be assessed against applications that have been received by the closure time. Should the project be under-subscribed after all on time applications have been assessed and eligible applications awarded, late applications may then be considered.

14. Useful resources

Landholders requiring further information are encouraged to review the following:

WEBINARS AND FARM CASE STUDY VIDEO LINKS

Improving farm dams: a farmers perspective

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gsgQM84dfSY>

Farm Dam Enhancements for Multiple Benefits by Sustainable Farms

<http://www.sustainablefarms.org.au/fielddays/enhancing-farm-dams-webinar-recording-now-available>

Farm Dam Blitz – making wildlife welcome

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clxfkq_NjTY

FACT SHEETS AND WRITTEN RESOURCES

Improving Farm Dams

Enhancing your farm dam by Greta Landcare Group

<http://gretalandcare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Enhancing-Your-Farm-Dam.pdf>

Enhancing farm dams by Sustainable Farms

http://sustainablefarms.org.au/sites/default/files/Farm%20dams%20brochure%20v3_online.pdf

Enhancing farm dams: What to plant in and around your dam

http://www.sustainablefarms.org.au/sites/default/files/Farm%20Dam%20Planting%20Guide%20brochure%208.2_low%20res.pdf

The farm dam handbook

https://www.waternsw.com.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/113687/FarmDamFinalLR.pdf

Revegetation

Revegetation Resources by Holbrook Landcare

<https://holbrooklandcare.org.au/holbrook-landcare-revegetation-guide/>

Revegetation Resources by Local Land Services

<https://www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/murray/articles,-plans-and-publications/nrm-news-november-2020/thinking-of-planting-or-seeding-native-vegetation-start-planning-now>.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Increased livestock weight gain from improved water quality in farm dams: A cost-benefit analysis
<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0256089>

15. More Information

Any queries or questions can be emailed to: farmwater.murray@lls.nsw.gov.au

Alternatively, contact:

Mrs Melinda Ritchie
Land Services Officer
Murray LLS Albury.
Ph: 02 6051 2200
Mobile 0447 839 755

Mr Adrian Smith
Senior Land Services Officer
Murray LLS Deniliquin
Ph: 03 5881 9900
Mobile: 0447 778 515