



Local Land  
Services  
Murray

# Local Annual Report 2016





# Foreword

On behalf of the Board of Murray Local Land Services, I am very pleased to present the Murray Local Land Services Local Annual Report 2016.

The year brought its own challenges and seasonal extremes, with wet conditions and water logging mid-year leading to floods followed by quite dry conditions by mid-November. We worked to provide ongoing service across all areas while responding to the specific demands of the seasonal conditions and the immediate response required of emergencies. The 2016 flood response included aerial surveillance for at-risk animals, liaising with affected landholders, aerial fodder drops to stranded stock and pre-emptive contact with potentially affected landholders to check on their preparations for the upcoming flood peak.

It has been a year of achievement that would not have been possible without the continued support and commitment of a large number of individual landholders, Aboriginal communities, Landcare and producer groups, volunteers, government agencies across NSW, Victoria and South Australia, local government, industry groups, schools and research institutions.

Our local presence meant our community Board benefited in its decision making from the contributions of many individuals providing their expertise through steering committees, project working groups and community advisory groups, including the local community advisory group, the regional weeds committee and the Murray Aboriginal Technical Group.

We continue to receive solid support from key funding partners including the Australian Government via the National Landcare Programme, and the NSW Government, through the Catchment Action NSW program. This funding contributes to many restoration and rehabilitation works, agricultural trials and demonstrations, and a range of events across the regions. It also supports many activities led and delivered by farmer and community groups in the region. Without the continued support of both programs, along with the contributions of our ratepayers, we and our community partners would be unable to deliver many of the programs we do.

The Board and I continue to be impressed by the community's efforts to improve the way land is managed for productive and sustainable outcomes. The region has an active network of community organisations providing information and support to land managers. This year, 42 community organisations delivered projects from funding sourced through Murray Local Land Services. Developing collaborative approaches with these organisations and other stakeholders remains a focus for the organisation.



This report showcases some of the outcomes we have achieved in partnership with the community, and demonstrates the outputs delivered across the region. While this is a great snapshot of the year, there have also been a number of highlights. For me these have included:

- Ramsar and buffer zones project – the protection of natural assets of international significance, including threatened species such as turtles and bitterns, through partnerships with adjacent landholders, traditional owners and other government agencies.
- Livestock discussion groups springing up in the Murray region, with the support of Murray Local Land Services. The groups bring producers together according to location and enterprise type, facilitating information sharing and discussion of hot topics.
- Investigation of viable dryland pasture options in a project led by the Western Murray Land Improvement Group and supported by Murray Local Land Services. Now in its fourth year, the project has trialled more than 50 species and is starting to produce reliable recommendations on species suitable to the climate and soils of the western Murray valley.
- The engagement of the community in activities delivered by Local Land Services and community partners in events funded through the National Landcare Programme, with 12,601 participants at 769 events.
- Our open-call Community Grants program, which, in 2016, enabled 21 community groups to deliver projects that addressed local priorities. The projects covered agricultural, environmental and community capacity initiatives across the region.

- Cooperative aerial baiting of wild dogs involving our wild dog groups, National Parks and Wildlife Service and Forestry Corporation NSW.
- Roll-out of a dollar-for-dollar wild dog exclusion fencing program funded from the Federal Government's Drought Pest and Weed program, erecting 130 km of electric fencing across several wild dog-affected holdings.
- Delivery of an integrated feral pig control program in conjunction with Riverina and Western Local Land Services in cooperation with landholders and public land managers in our region's west.
- Declaration of two local areas as Aboriginal places, Doodle Comer and Mungabareena on 14 October. We were particularly pleased to support the declaration of Mungabareena, having endorsed the inclusion of the Waterworks Travelling Stock Reserve in the declaration.

We continue to value feedback to enable us to continuously improve our service. This year we ran satisfaction surveys with customers and customer organisations such as producer and Landcare groups. While pleased with the positive results, we are also responding to the opportunities for improvement identified.

In response to feedback we have continued to improve our communications to customers. I was particularly pleased with the introduction of e-newsletters for customers. 'Production Advice' a monthly e-newsletter and 'production alerts' for time critical issues provide information to land managers and stakeholders, on technical, agronomic, animal health and biosecurity information. 'NRM News' provides quarterly updates to customers on natural resource management projects and issues in the region.

I am delighted to confirm that Murray Local Land Services and our community group partners applied successfully to host the 2017 NSW Local Land Services and Landcare Conference. I look forward to seeing you there in October 2017.

Finally, I would also like to extend the Board's thanks to the Murray Local Land Services team, who have displayed commitment and passion in working with the community to deliver a fantastic year. Our staff are truly motivated to improve the way land is managed in the region for a range of outcomes.

Working as a cohesive team they ensure that the combination of skills and experiences they have as individuals are collectively targeted to maximise value for our customers. On behalf of the Board I acknowledge their contributions and commend them on their work.

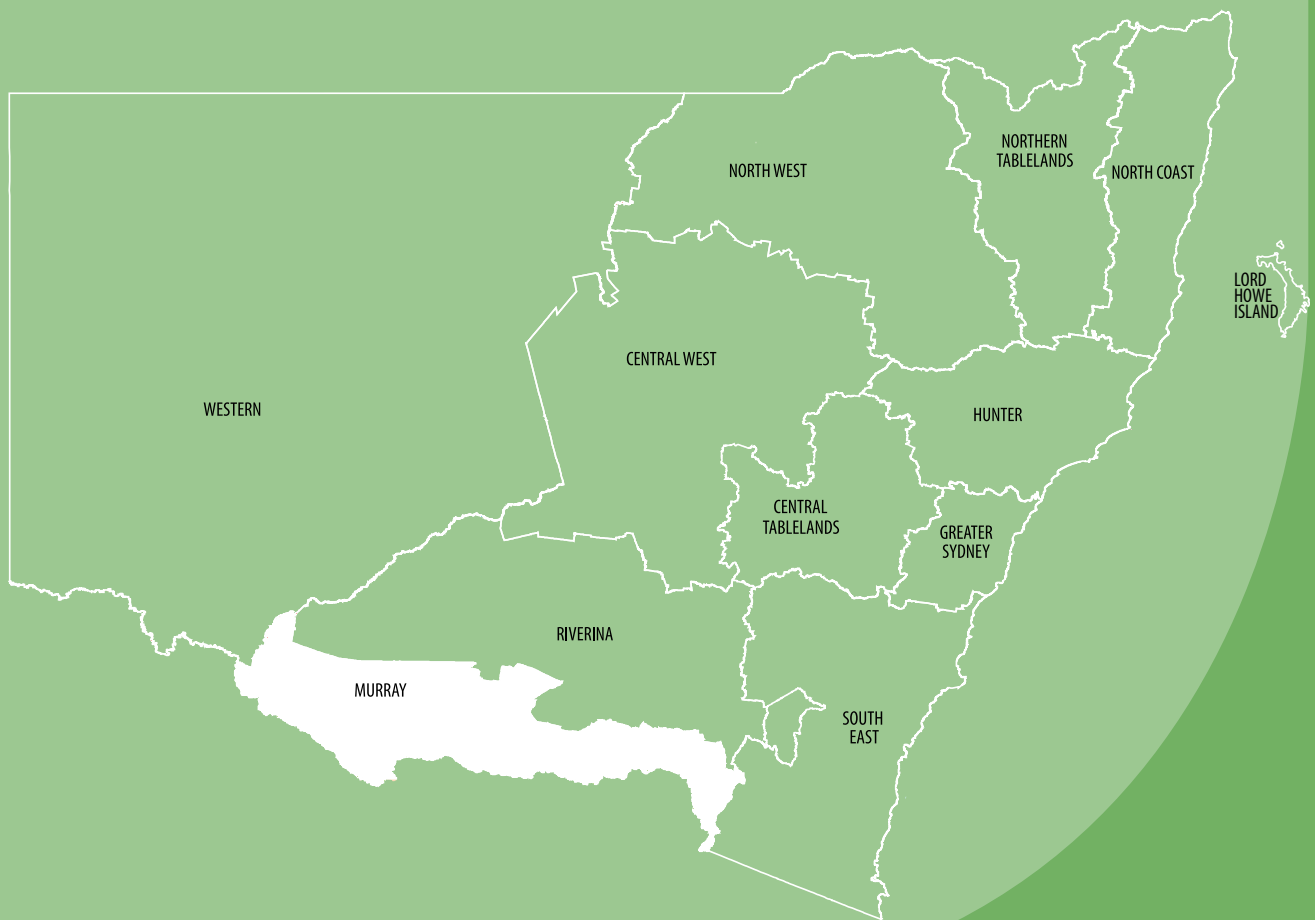
In closing, I look forward to working with you to make 2017 a successful and profitable year.

**Richard Bull**

**Chair, Murray Local Land Services**



# Murray region at a glance



The NSW Murray region spans more than 42,000 square kilometres across a range of environments, from the steep alpine slopes in the east to the vast native grasslands, rangelands and riverine floodplains to the west. Nationally significant areas include Kosciuszko National Park, the Murray River, and the central Murray red gum forests that are recognised as important wetlands under the Ramsar Convention. Murray Local Land Services is responsible for the management of approximately 53,000 ha of travelling stock reserves (TSRs) in the region.

The Murray region has always supported a large Aboriginal population and features many important cultural locations of state, national and international significance.

The region's population of around 107,000 people is concentrated along the Murray, Edward-Wakool and Billabong-Yanco river systems in towns such as Barham, Corowa, Moama, Deniliquin, Toomumwal and our only major city, Albury. Murray Local Land Services provides services to over 6,000 rural land managers, as well as those living in peri-urban areas, which are concentrated around Albury in particular, but also around other regional centres.

Other important regional centres include Moulamein, Berrigan, Finley, Holbrook, Jerilderie and Tumbarumba. Many of these population centres are closely linked

to nearby Victorian communities and services. Many rural villages also service their local and often remote communities. Approximately 75 per cent of land in the region is privately owned.

Land and water resources within the Murray region support diverse agricultural enterprises, including cropping, grazing and dairying. Extensive water supply infrastructure—including Australia's largest irrigation network and the famous Snowy Mountain Hydro-Electric Scheme—supplements low rainfall areas to support viable towns and industries. Much of the region's multi-billion dollar economy therefore depends on continuing access to, and the productivity of, its natural resources. Approximately one-third of our residents are directly involved in agriculture alone.

Although there are significant physical and climatic differences between east and west, issues identified by the community are often similar. For example, the need to manage disease-free, profitable and sustainable agricultural enterprises, control weeds and pests, strengthen community cohesion, improve infrastructure and services, and sustainably manage soils and rivers are consistent across the region.

# 2016 local achievements



# Local Land Services goals

Local Land Services aligns all of its work with its mission of being a customer-focused business that enables improved primary production and better management of natural resources. The strategic direction of Local Land Services is summarised in four organisational goals.

Resilient,  
self-reliant and  
prepared local  
communities

Biosecure, profitable,  
productive and  
sustainable primary  
industries

Healthy, diverse,  
connected  
natural  
environments

Board members  
and staff who are  
collaborative,  
innovative and  
commercially-focused



## Local Land Services statewide goals

The operations of Murray Local Land Services are aligned and integrated with the four statewide goals of Local Land Services. The Murray Local Strategic Plan describes each area of operation and outlines key strategies and activities that will achieve each statewide goal.

### Resilient, self-reliant and prepared local communities

*Murray Local Land Services is committed to making a significant contribution to the Murray region in order to see it thrive. Resilience, self-reliance and preparedness are vital ingredients in a thriving community, ensuring it is better able to withstand shocks or disturbances to the landscape, production of food and fibre and the economy, and still maintain its functions and structures.*

The following activities have been implemented by Murray Local Land Services in 2016 in delivering to the Murray Local Strategic Plan 2016-2021.

#### Communities in our landscapes

Murray Local Land Services believes that organised, prepared communities are better able to adapt to change, continuously improve practice and actively work to achieve goals associated with natural resource management (NRM), sustainable agriculture, and individual and industry preparedness and response. Our dedicated Communities team manages grant funding to support community capacity and help groups to address local issues.

Murray Local Land Services assists community groups to access funding, deliver projects, be active, engage with community, build member numbers and source land management information. Our staff work closely with the Regional Landcare Facilitator and with groups across the region, supporting:

- the capacity of key groups
- funding to 42 organisations to deliver projects that address local priorities
- training programs across the region
- the extension of natural resource management, agriculture and biosecurity messages to the wider community, including through a coordinated communications program and well-established schools program.

During 2016, across all functions of Murray Local Land Services, we further refined our delivery based on concepts of localism and devolution of funding.

This has meant:

- continuing to improve our community consultative framework and feedback mechanisms through governance processes, including:
  - our region-wide community member Local Community Advisory Group (LCAG)
  - ongoing input and expanded membership of the Murray Aboriginal Technical Group (MATG)
  - the Murray Regional Weeds Committee (RWC), a community advisory group tasked with advising us on strategic regional weed issues
  - community representation and involvement on regional program and project steering committees
- partnering and co-delivering with Landcare and producer groups on the majority of our project activities
- improving communication processes and activities.

The Regional Group Capacity program has been successful in bringing communities together to share ideas and enable local decision-making through building knowledge and skills.

Highlights of 2016 include:

- Ongoing collaboration, partnering and support for key group networks in the region, which support the wider Landcare and producer group community.



- Support for network and group projects which bring communities together to share ideas, make local decisions and build knowledge and skills. Project outcomes include:
  - Environmental examples such as Corowa District Landcare’s woodlands, fauna and frogs workshops, Parklands Albury Wodonga’s project to create habitat for squirrel gliders and Walla Walla Public School’s popular practical natural resource management workshop series.
  - Similarly, Corowa District Landcare and Holbrook Landcare Network have engaged their communities to improve soil health through better nutrient, grazing and livestock management practices.
  - The Aboriginal Services program has supported Aboriginal communities and organisations through a range of projects, including the development of guided cultural tours, the restoration of a traditional camp site for education and gatherings, sharing of local histories between cultures, possum skin cloak and weaving workshops, and opportunities for elders to exchange traditional ecological knowledge through camps, workshops and gatherings.
- Developing a framework for investing in and supporting groups’ capacity, in collaboration with Landcare and producer groups across the region.
- Completion of one community grants round, delivering 34 grants to 21 groups. A total of 996 people participated in sustainable land management, natural resource management and connection to Country activities through this program.
- The Regional Landcare Facilitator (RLF) project, which assisted 137 people to participate in training and skills development, supported 26 groups, hosted six workshops and delivered 421 communications products.
- The Creative Catchment Kids project (CCK), which continues to be delivered across the Murray region, with 20 schools participating.

## Aboriginal communities

We support Aboriginal people to care for country, share traditional land management knowledge and help protect and strengthen Aboriginal cultural heritage.

We’re working to promote Aboriginal cultural awareness and enhance engagement throughout our region. Our goal is to support Aboriginal communities through employment and training opportunities to build skills and capacity in land management.

Projects in the past year have included:

- delivering a range of community driven projects addressing Traditional Ecological Knowledge, the protection of cultural heritage and management of our natural resource



- undertaking cross-cultural training to improve opportunities for Murray Local Land Services to work with Aboriginal communities
- providing employment opportunities for Aboriginal people in sustainable land management.
- working with Aboriginal organisations and crews to revegetate and protect rare, unique, endangered and degraded Sand Woodland ecosystems of high Aboriginal cultural significance.

## Emergency management and disaster relief

Murray Local Land Services works with emergency management agencies and the community to better prepare the region in case of natural disasters and emergency animal and plant disease outbreaks.

Highlights of 2016 included:

- Establishment of local control centres at Albury and Deniliquin to respond to extensive spring flooding. During the response, we conducted aerial surveillance for at-risk animals, coordinated fodder drops to stranded animals and pre-emptively contacted landholders ahead of the flood peak to ensure they were adequately prepared.
- Coordination of individual landholder flood damage reports, which assisted in obtaining the Agricultural Natural Disaster declarations for the region’s affected local government areas.
- Contribution to flood recovery activities within the region through targeted information sessions.
- An emergency animal disease exercise designed to test our response to a hypothetical disease outbreak during the National Polocrosse Championships in Albury. It was conducted in conjunction with the Albury Equestrian Centre, polocrosse championship organisers, NSW Police, Department of Health, Emergency NSW, Department of Primary Industries and Albury City Council (see case study, page 16).

## Sustainable agriculture

Murray Local Land Services provides advisory services to landholders in the region to improve the sustainability and resilience of the landscape, agriculture industries and communities. Our team provides credible, independent advice and extension services built on sound scientific knowledge and evidence-based practices.

We have enhanced the capacity of land managers to improve primary production and natural resource management directly and in partnership with land manager organisations.

Together, with 20 community group partners, projects supported by Local Land Services have provided information and advice to more than 2,900 customers at events such as field days, seminars and discussion groups. This has resulted in improving sustainable practice on at least 90,750 ha in the region. Our major funding partners are the Australian Government, through the National Landcare Programme (NLP), and The NSW government.

During 2016, our agriculture team focused on key industries and resources within our region. Major achievements for each of these include:

### **Beef and sheep production systems**

Through support and funding, the network of livestock discussion groups expanded in the past 12 months. There are beef and sheep groups now operating around Finley, Deniliquin, Mathoura and in the Upper Murray. Each group has between 12 and 25 members, and they meet up to six times a year to discuss topics focused on sustainable production.

### **Irrigated systems**

We are a major contributor to industry bodies such as the Rice Crop Protection working group, which supports the industry to keep abreast of rice crop protection issues.

Rice discussion groups continued in 2016, hosted by Murray Local Land Services and the Ricegrowers Association of Australia's rice extension network. We provided technical support for growers.

### **Dryland cropping systems**

Dryland pasture systems - A long-term project based in the Wakool district is being implemented by the Western Murray Land Improvement Group supported with funding and expertise from Local Land Services. In 2016, the project trialled new and existing pasture species including annual legumes, grasses, herbs, perennials and shrubs. The trials have begun to show trends that farmers can put into practice.

### **Dairy**

We continue to support the Murray Dairy Regional Network and the Riverina Dairy Discussion Group, assisting Murray Dairy and dairy producers through current industry issues.

Project work continues with Murray Dairy on developing fact sheets on the best irrigated pastures for dairies in our region, with particular focus on low-irrigation availability into the future.



Photo: Vera Hong

### **Climate**

In a joint initiative with NSW DPI, irrigation-focused climate adaptation modelling has analysed adaptation strategies to improve the understanding of climate change impacts on regional irrigation farms.

### **Soil**

The Nutrient Management program, being run in association with Holbrook Landcare Network, has delivered information and created practice change that for more efficient and effective application of fertilisers that reduce nutrient run-off and increases profitability sustainably.

Our Dustwatch monitoring program, in conjunction with the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, supports monitoring of soil condition. Monitoring results demonstrate that efforts to minimise erosion and conserve soil are being effective. Monitoring also identifies areas to target for further work.

### **Water**

An irrigated soils project has monitored soil moisture levels created by rain and irrigation. Waterlogging is major issue in irrigated cropping systems and impacts on water use efficiency. This project focussed on improving knowledge and skills to inform better decisions on a range of irrigated layouts and soil types for improved resource utilisation efficiency.

Our advisory service was strengthened with the introduction of Production Advice, a monthly e-newsletter for land managers and stakeholders, providing timely technical, agronomic, animal health and biosecurity information.

# Biosecure, profitable, productive and sustainable primary industries

*Effective biosecurity and animal welfare is insurance to maintain market access for Murray livestock and crop producers, now and in the future. The Murray region produce is free of many of the pests and diseases found in other parts of the world, and that's why Local Land Services works diligently with ratepayers to monitor herds, flocks, and crops across the region and shares up-to-date advice and information to boost productivity.*

## Animal biosecurity and welfare

In the past year, our district veterinarians and biosecurity officers conducted 355 property visits, including 191 disease investigations. Disease investigations and surveillance enable the early detection of problems and ensure the quality and safety of NSW livestock and livestock products, and access to domestic and international markets. In the past year we undertook 11 investigations to exclude an emergency animal disease.

Disease surveillance has been one of our major projects for 2016. It has encompassed surveillance activities both on Murray region properties as well as saleyards at Deniliquin, Finley, Corowa, Jerilderie and Urana.

The surveillance project broadly encompasses many conditions that may affect the health and productivity of livestock in the district, with a particular focus on potentially notifiable (endemic and exotic) or emerging animal diseases, including anthrax, footrot, transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (e.g. mad cow disease) and foot and mouth disease. Also included are specific programs such as the ovine brucellosis project, the sheep biosecurity area audit, the swill feeding project and the footrot project.

Our surveillance visits to saleyards are also tied to our National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) compliance project, which audits the tagging and movement documentation for sheep and/or cattle at these sales.

The NLIS enhances our ability to respond to major food safety or emergency animal disease incidents.

We have strengthened our NLIS compliance auditing this year through Operation Mary, a joint Local Land Services/ NSW DPI intensive sheep audit. It focused on untagged sheep and National Vendor Declarations of non-vendor bred sheep where the visual Property Identification Codes were not recorded or pink tags were not used.

Sheepcatcher II was a nationwide exercise that sought to further test our mob-based system by proving NSW compliance with the tracing time frame set out for a mock disease outbreak situation.

Tracing is an important aspect that also strongly applies in our residue project, which deals both with properties known to have residue issues, and which are under property management plans, as well as properties that have had positive test results at abattoir surveillance.

## Invasive species

The biosecurity program also includes the management of invasive species. Invasive pests can impact significantly on the productivity and profitability of agriculture. We work with landholders to minimise the impact of pests on agricultural production and the environment.

The invasive species and plant biosecurity team helps landholders to deliver control programs targeting wild dogs, foxes, feral pigs and rabbits.

During 2016, our team:

- guided and supported three wild dog management groups
- facilitated 1080 wild dog baiting on 81 properties covering 178,000 ha, including an aerial baiting program that delivered 3,705 baits along 130 km of bait lines within state forest and national park estate.
- held nine training workshops to allow 101 landholders to access 1080 and Pindone poisons
- supplied 56,489 baits for 1,014 fox baiting programs
- assisted with rabbit control programs on 36 properties using 1.5 tonnes of bait and covering 21,447 ha
- prepared 1.5 tonnes of pig bait for use on 10 properties covering approximately 6,000 ha
- assisted NSW DPI to undertake targeted surveillance for Russian wheat aphid and lupin anthracnose.

## Travelling stock reserves and stock management

Murray Local Land Services manages travelling stock reserves for multiple users in the common interest of the whole community. We manage more than 50,000 ha of travelling stock reserves and promote a balance of use for production, social, cultural and environmental outcomes, and continuously work to maintain and improve the resource.

Mobs of travelling stock are common throughout the Murray, with 1,240 walking permits (including 787 routine stock movement permits) issued in 2016 for stock movements.

To control the movement of stock, Murray Local Land Services monitors the National Livestock Identification Scheme for compliance by undertaking saleyard audits and inspections. In 2016, we completed 80 inspections. In addition, some 145 livestock export certificates were issued from the Murray during 2016, ensuring our stock are free from livestock health and disease problems. To protect market access, Murray Local Land Services also manages the Property Identification Code (PIC) scheme, with 117 PICs issued during the year.

## Healthy, diverse, connected natural environments

*Murray Local Land Services' team works hard to bring landholders and our customers the best available research, knowledge and skills to assist producers to be more profitable and to ensure that natural resources are available for future generations. We support healthy environments and biodiverse ecosystems across the Murray region by assisting landholders and communities to improve the quality of their land, soil, vegetation and water through grants and funding for on-ground projects, partnerships and training.*

### Land management

Healthy ecosystems underpin successful, productive primary producers and communities. Through investment from the NSW and Australian governments, we support a healthy ecosystem across the landscapes of NSW.

We're focussed on implementing landscape-scale approaches to address threats to the natural environment. In particular, we support land managers to rehabilitate degraded habitat, manage weeds and pests, and contribute to the recovery of threatened ecological communities.

In the past year, we negotiated 47 voluntary conservation agreements, protecting and conserving 4,511 ha of land for biodiversity enhancement, and 334 ha received support for measures to better manage sustainable grazing.

Projects in the past year have included:

- management and enhancement of travelling stock reserves to provide biodiversity conservation benefits by using a mix of active management and on-ground rehabilitation activities
- riparian zone protection in the Edward-Wakool area to improve the condition and connectivity of native vegetation and provide flow-on benefits to associated creeks and their faunal communities
- establishing, enhancing and managing corridors of vegetation across public and private land to improve landscape connectivity in over-cleared landscapes
- wetland rehabilitation to improve carbon storage potential and biodiversity values of wetlands on private and public lands.
- activities to build knowledge and skills to support adaptive management of our landscapes and natural resources.

### Biodiversity

Native vegetation benefits both on-farm production and environmental health. Healthy native vegetation can increase land values and productivity while reducing operating costs.

We're aiming to improve the condition of native vegetation and riparian areas, extend habitat for threatened flora and fauna, and enhance existing wetland vegetation extent and quality. To achieve this, we have enhanced and rehabilitated 972 ha of wetland.

Sound management of native vegetation to rehabilitate, enhance and protect remnants and to increase the area of native vegetation in the landscape is a key objective for land managers in the Murray region. In the past year we have enhanced and rehabilitated 2,360 ha of land and protected 1,179 ha of vegetation through fencing.

With better knowledge and improved land management techniques, soil is protected by native vegetation to reduce its susceptibility to erosion.

Native vegetation is also critical for maintaining and improving habitat for many threatened flora and fauna species and for sustaining the health and function of local ecosystems. We planted 464 ha of native species to assist in regeneration.

Projects in the past year have included:

- addressing threats to local natural areas of regional, national and international significance, with a focus on treatment of pests and weeds and re-connecting people to their landscapes and local species
- threatened species conservation programs rolled out across public and private lands, particularly for squirrel gliders, small-bodied native fish, bush stone-curlews, Booroolong and Corroboree frogs and threatened orchids
- supporting the conservation of endangered ecological communities, such as Boree woodlands, montane peatlands, grassy-box woodlands and sandhills
- activities to increase awareness of the value of natural areas and biodiversity, and promote behaviours and practices that support the sustainable management of these.



Photo: Vera Hong



## Investment and partnerships

Local Land Services supports and engages Landcare networks, producer groups, community and industry partners to undertake agricultural, natural resource management, biosecurity and capacity building activities. Working with Landcare NSW and the NSW Government, we're aiming to improve land and water ecosystem management, soil health, and native vegetation protection.

Murray Local Land Services has allocated more than \$1.1 million dollars for the operation of local Landcare networks and the delivery of regional Landcare facilitator functions for the three-year period from 2015 to 2018. This does not include funding invested through landcare and producer groups for delivery of collaborative projects addressing a range of agriculture, natural resource management and biosecurity projects.

Collaborative projects in the past year have included those delivered by 42 separate groups from numerous funding sources: Projects include

- the Community Grants program, which provides funds to community groups for 21 sustainable land management, natural resource management and connection to Country projects

- the Creative Catchment Kids program, run by the Wirraminna Environment Education Centre, which engages young people in natural resource management and sustainable agricultural production.
- A range of natural resource management projects addressing threatened species, habitat management, biodiversity and ecosystem services projects
- Agricultural and biosecurity projects including trials, demonstrations, pest control, farmer discussion groups and events that address key industry and resource issues in the region.

In addition to community partners Murray Local Land Services works collaboratively with national, state and local government investors and delivery and service agencies to improve the service we offer in the region. We also partner with a range of research, educational and industry stakeholders to maximise opportunities for our customers.

Murray Local Land Services continues to explore a range of investment opportunities to bring additional funding in to the region to address customer needs. We have been successful with a number of applications in 2016.

## Board members and staff who are collaborative, innovative and commercially-focused

Throughout 2016, Murray Local Land Services continued to grow and develop as an organisation focused on delivering customer-valued services in an integrated, efficient and effective manner.

This was achieved through our strong commitment to:

- developing enthusiastic and accountable people who understand the objectives of the organisation and its customers, and how they contribute to achieving these
- fostering a values-based culture that emphasises collaboration, innovation, customer service and continuous improvement
- recognising and celebrating individual, team and organisational successes
- providing real opportunities for the Murray Local Land Services Board and staff to combine their collective skills and knowledge to improve business outcomes
- pro-actively working to deliver a safe, efficient, effective and sustainable organisation.

This has enabled Murray Local Land Services to deliver our regional objectives and priorities to continuously improve the services we provide to our customers, including:

- embedding a values-based service culture that is responsive to client, customer and community needs
- valuing the importance of being accountable for our actions
- engaging and retaining skilled, experienced and motivated team members
- prioritising workplace health, safety and wellbeing
- continuing to develop the leadership, management, communication and engagement skills of our people
- ensuring our team understands their role, how this aligns with the organisation's goals and are clear about their day-to-day responsibilities
- providing training that is relevant, timely and focused on developing the required skills of the team.

Highlights for 2016 include:

### **Emergency management training and preparedness**

The region prioritised equipping team members with the skills to undertake a wide range of roles in the event of an emergency, as well as supporting the community during the recovery phase.

This included training incident controllers, logistics managers and aircraft operations coordinators through to ensuring the team could provide assistance in pasture recovery, native vegetation rehabilitation and supporting the community to come together and focus on recovery. This enabled the Murray Local Land Services team to support the community during the largest flood in more than 30 years.

### **Cultural awareness and competency training**

Murray Local Land Services acknowledges and values the important role that Aboriginal people have within our community and across the landscape. To improve our collective understanding of Aboriginal culture, beliefs and values, the team spent time with local elders and Aboriginal researchers to hear their stories and find new and exciting ways to engage with Aboriginal people.

### **Testing of our emergency field evacuation procedures**

To ensure our people are safe and supported in the event of an accident, we tested our field emergency and evacuation procedures. This provided valuable information from which we refined and improved our evacuation procedures.

### **Customer, stakeholder and client support and services training**

Murray Local Land Services is always seeking ways to improve the service we provide for our customers. To achieve this, we undertook training in how to assist customers who are faced with challenging circumstances, as well as media and communications training.

### **Development of business theme plans and whole-of-organisation business plan**

In 2016 we developed theme plans for all aspects of our business, as well as a comprehensive business plan. These plans translate the Board's strategic direction into on-ground programs, ensure integration of our business, provide clarity to team members on how they contribute to the organisation's directions and ensure transparency on where funds are being spent.



## Our community



Deniliquin-based Sandra Campbell is a key member of the Murray Local Land Services team, delivering customer service across the entire Murray region.

While Sandra's central role is as a Senior Customer Service Officer, she has also been trained in many aspects of emergency management. She applied this training during the severe weather events in the Murray region during October 2016, when she played a significant role as Logistics Manager, coordinating the operations of the Local Control Centre responding to the flood event. Sandra handled the intricacies and pressure of this challenge with calm professionalism.

For the past six months, Sandra has also been acting part-time in a senior administration officer role. She has adapted well to this opportunity and gained a wealth of knowledge in the financial and administration area.

Sandra and other customer service staff strive to provide a one-stop-shop for customers, delivering excellent customer service in a friendly and competent manner.

# Improving the productivity and sustainability of irrigated farming systems

*"The ongoing collaboration we have with Murray Local Land Services is invaluable. It provides a strong link to irrigators and farming groups in the Murray Valley, so our research is aligned with industry needs and our findings are widely and effectively communicated."*

- NSW DPI, Deniliquin Research Hydrologist, Sam North, .

## Location

Southern NSW.

## The challenge

Murray Local Land Services knows how important broadacre irrigation is to the local economy, environment and community.

Helping irrigators use and manage irrigation water as efficiently as possible is key to ensuring the ongoing viability of our region.

## Work undertaken

Murray Local Land Services partnered with the community in a range of projects and programs aimed at providing the latest thinking to irrigators and their advisors.

Among them was the Maximising On-Farm Irrigation Profitability project, being led by NSW DPI, which aimed to develop sustainable broadacre irrigation systems that increase the profitability and flexibility of farming systems in the southern Murray Darling Basin.

As one of many project partners, Murray Local Land Services is providing both financial and technical support to the research, which involves trial sites examining rice, cotton, maize, and winter crops and pastures, as well as evaluations of contour, v-bay and beds-in-bays surface irrigation layouts.

## Benefits

As a result of the ongoing research, information is now becoming available on:

- the impact of varying irrigation schedules on nitrogen (N) uptake, efficiency and lint yield in cotton
- the effectiveness of remote sensing in predicting N uptake in cotton, enabling better prediction and fine tuning of N applications
- using different management strategies to apply the same amount of N and varying irrigation schedules in maize
- soil chemical properties during and post-rice
- water flows and movement within different irrigation layouts, which helps in designing new surface irrigation layouts
- economic assessments of new and old irrigation layouts.



## Key achievement

The project consolidates already strong relationships in the sector that focus on providing support and useful data to broadacre irrigators in the region.

It is now in its second year, and is building on the results from the first season.

## In collaboration with

- NSW DPI
- Federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
- Cotton Research and Development Corporation
- Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation
- Deakin University
- Irrigation Research and Extension Committee
- Murrumbidgee and Irrigated Copping Council
- Southern Grower Group.



# Improving biodiversity on Cox's travelling stock reserve

*"The five-year Australian Government investment into TSRs in the region, which finishes in June 2017, has provided valuable resources to invest in the management of biodiversity on many of the regions travelling stock reserves, supported by planned and managed access for grazing."*

- Murray Local Land Services, Acting Manager Land Services, David Clarke.

## Location

Cox's travelling stock reserve, near Barooga NSW.

## The challenge

Cox's travelling stock reserve is a riverine sandhill woodland near Barooga that ecologically was in significant decline.

It had a history of managed grazing from both travelling stock and short-term grazing permits. Unauthorized grazing with both cattle and sheep was a frequent problem and was proving detrimental to the establishment of smaller shrubs and pine regrowth.

The challenge was to improve the lack of tree and shrub regeneration while continuing to provide access for travelling stock purposes.

## Work undertaken

- an initial 15.2 km of direct seeding in 2013 of species including gold dust wattle, golden wattle, grey wattle, western black, bull oak, native black thorn, wedge leaf hop bush, hooked needle wood, yellow box and pine
- an additional six km of direct seeding in 2015
- measures to protect the regeneration works, including spraying for red-legged earth mites, weed spraying and pest control
- collaboration with drovers and stock owners to ensure any short-term grazing on the reserve is strategic timed to assist with the control of annual weeds impacting on young seedlings.

## Benefits

- increased native vegetation, improved biodiversity and a reduction in pests and weeds on the reserve
- improved management of the reserve for the benefit of all users.



## Key achievement

Managing this public asset for rehabilitation of a significant slice of remnant vegetation while maintaining access for controlled grazing.

## In collaboration with

The Australian Government through its five-year \$2.96 million Biodiversity Fund.

# Testing emergency animal disease preparedness

*"It was valuable having to engage the brain to solve problems with a very large potential community issue. It gave me a whole new perspective on biosecurity and the importance of our role."*

- Murray Local Land Services, District Veterinarian, Scott Ison.

## Location

Albury, NSW.

## The challenge

Murray Local Land Services' animal biosecurity and welfare team identified the need to improve the capability and experience of staff to identify and respond to an emergency animal disease (EAD) incursion.

Murray Local Land Services had not yet developed an understanding of the contribution required of local support agencies to facilitate a systematic and efficient response.

## Work undertaken

A one-day exercise was organised, designed to enable staff to practise responding to an EAD incident.

Titled Exercise Unicus, it centred on a suspected Hendra case in a single interstate horse at a large national horse event at the Albury Equestrian Centre.

It brought together 30 participants from Murray Local Land Services and NSW DPI, along with private veterinarians, event organisers, equestrian centre management, NSW Police, NSW Health and local government.

## Benefits

- participants familiarised themselves with existing NSW DPI policies and procedures for the detection and response to Hendra
- increased knowledge of Hendra, including its history, epidemiology and risks to human and equine health
- improved awareness of the correct application of personal protective equipment, a critical risk control to safety of all people in a suspected Hendra case
- increased staff understanding of their particular roles and responsibilities in an EAD scenario
- enhanced understanding among stakeholders and support agencies of NSW DPI and Murray Local Land Services' role as lead response agency for EAD response and EAD – Hendra
- improved familiarity of support agency support roles in EAD response to effective and efficient management of EAD including EAD - Hendra



- enhanced relationships between Murray Local Land Services, NSW DPI, stakeholders and support agencies
- achievement of a key performance indicator within the Murray Local Land Services Animal Welfare Biosecurity and Welfare Business Plan 2015-2016 by holding an annual EAD workshop focusing on the local risks and including external stakeholders.

## Key achievement

Bringing the relevant representatives together at the same time can be challenging and may be perceived as resource intensive.

The animal biosecurity and welfare team were able to articulate the potential risks and impact to the equine industry and local community as well as the role stakeholders and support agencies would play in facilitating efficient and effective response to an EAD.

## In collaboration with

NSW DPI Emergency, Animal Disease Response preparedness program.

# Big gains for little fish with habitat improvements



Australian Government

National  
Landcare  
Programme



*"Water plants are a critical habitat feature for Southern Pygmy Perch."*

- NSW DPI Fisheries, Fisheries Manager, Luke Pearce.

## Location

Coppabella and Holbrook, NSW.

## The challenge

Small-bodied native fish play an important role in aquatic ecosystems, providing a critical link in food webs between zooplankton and larger fish and birds. However, they don't tend to receive the attention of larger fish species like the iconic Murray cod.

Many small-bodied native fish are under threat, and for some species their current distribution is significantly smaller than their potential range.

Historic practices, including allowing stock access to creeks, replacement of native vegetation with willows and flow regulation have substantially reduced the suitability of our creeks for small-bodied native fish. Of particular concern in the Murray region is the southern pygmy perch, which was once broadly distributed but is now restricted to two sites in the region.

## Work undertaken

Murray Local Land Services is working with industry, landholders and the community to enhance key habitat areas for the southern pygmy perch at Holbrook and Coppabella.

Landholders are fencing off sections of creek, planting native species and actively managing willows and blackberry on their properties.

Murray Local Land Services is also engaging with local schools to raise awareness about small-bodied fish. The schools have received an aquarium tank and captive-bred southern pygmy perch as part of a learning module delivered with Petaurus Education Group.

Students have completed assignments about the species and have learnt how to care for the fish in their tanks. One group of students has done such a great job that their fish recently bred!



## Benefits

- improved community awareness about small-bodied native fish
- improved riparian and aquatic vegetation and reduced stream turbidity and nutrients
- reduced erosion of farmland near creeks
- flow-on benefits for other small-bodied native fish and frogs.

## Key achievement

- southern pygmy perch population at key sites have been maintained or are increasing
- building connections of local youth with their local landscapes and species.

## In collaboration with

- Australian Government's National Landcare Programme
- Catchment Action NSW
- NSW DPI Fisheries
- Office of Environment and Heritage
- landholders
- Forestry Corporation NSW
- local community.

# Office locations

## Principal office

394 Hay Rd  
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## Deniliquin

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Albury NSW 2640  
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## Tumbarumba

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## Moulamein

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Moulamein, NSW, 2733  
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## Corowa

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Corowa NSW 2646  
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## Jerilderie

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