



Local Land  
Services  
Murray

# Local Annual Report 2015





# Foreword

On behalf of the Board of Murray Local Land Services, I am very pleased to present the Murray Local Annual Report 2015.

2015 has been a year of consolidation for the organisation in which we've worked hard to integrate the different arms of our business and focused on delivering a high standard of service for the community.

It has also 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.

In addition, I would like to make particular mention of our key funding partners, the Australian Government via the National Landcare Programme, and the NSW Government, through the Catchment Action NSW program. Without their continued support, along with the contributions of our ratepayers, we would not be able to deliver the programs we do.

When you consider the many individuals, groups and funding partners who contribute to the health and productivity of our region, it is clear that meaningful collaboration and partnerships are the keys to that success.

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:

- the Henty Field Days, which provided an excellent opportunity to meet with many people across the region, hear what is important to landholders, showcase some of our programs and gain ideas for the future
- Wirraminna Environment Centre, through the Creative Catchment Kids program, being awarded the NSW Junior Landcare Team at the NSW Landcare conference in Orange, and, as a result, being nominated to represent NSW at the national awards in 2016
- the innovation shown by the Upper Murray, Tumbarumba and Hume wild dog groups to trial GPS collaring of wild dogs to better understand their habits and help develop more effective control methods



- the establishment of, and work performed by, the Local Community Advisory Group, Murray Aboriginal Technical Group and Regional Weeds Committee. I am impressed by the calibre of the individuals who give up their time to sit on these committees and the high quality of the information that is being presented to the Board for consideration
- numerous field days to assist landholders deal with a range of biosecurity, animal health and land care issues
- consolidation of three separate offices into the one facility at Garland Avenue in Albury, providing a one-stop shop for our customers as well as an excellent facility for our team to work from.

It is also very pleasing to see the positive response to the production alerts and e-newsletters being distributed to landholders across the region. I believe these will be a very important source of information, new ideas and advice. I encourage you to promote the service to your friends and colleagues so they can sign up to receive them. I also welcome suggestions for improvement.

Finally, I would also like to extend the thanks of the Board to the Murray Local Land Services team, who have displayed commitment and passion in working with the community to deliver a fantastic year.

In closing, I look forward to working with you to make 2016 a successful and profitable year.

**Mr Richard Bull, Acting 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, Tocumwal 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.

# 2015 local achievements

383

PROPERTY VISITS  
BY VETS AND  
BIOSECURITY OFFICERS



700

GENERAL CONSULTATIONS BY  
VETS AND BIOSECURITY OFFICERS



85

SALEYARD INSPECTIONS

183

LIVESTOCK EXPORT  
CERTIFICATES ISSUED



5,569

PARTICIPANTS AT  
TRAINING EVENTS



2,050

HECTARES PROTECTED THROUGH  
VOLUNTARY CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS



74,733

BAITS ISSUED FOR 1,200  
FOX BAITING PROGRAMS



53

PROPERTIES INVOLVED  
IN WILD DOG SPRING BAITING

20



TONNES OF BAIT DISTRIBUTED  
FOR RABBIT CONTROL

500ha

VEGETATION ENHANCEMENT ON  
TRAVELLING STOCK RESERVES



# 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



Photo courtesy Heather Thurnam, Mullengandra Landcare

## Resilient, self-reliant and prepared local communities

Our investments in this space are based on the belief 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, 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. Team members also work with community groups to access funding, deliver projects, be active, engage members and source information. Our staff work closely with the Regional Landcare Facilitator and with groups across the region, supporting:

- the capacity of key groups
- funding to over 50 organisations to deliver projects that address local priorities
- leadership programs across the region
- the extension of NRM, agriculture and biosecurity messages to the wider public, including through a coordinated communications program and well-established schools program.

During 2015, across all functions of Murray Local Land Services, we further refined our delivery based on concepts of localism and devolution. This has meant:

- continuing to improve our community consultative framework and feedback mechanisms through governance processes including:
  - the first full year for our region-wide 15-community member Local Community Advisory Group (LCAG)
  - ongoing input and expanded membership of the Murray Aboriginal Technical Group (MATG)
  - conducting the inaugural meeting of the Murray Regional Weeds Committee (RWC), a community advisory group tasked with advising us on strategic regional weed issues
  - community representation and involvement on program and project steering committees.
- partnering and co-delivering with Landcare and producer groups on the majority of our project activities

Projects are bringing communities together to share ideas and enable local decision-making through building knowledge and skills.

- expanding the number of discussion and community groups addressing biosecurity, NRM and agricultural practice change
- 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 2015 include:

1. Ongoing collaboration, partnering and support for key group networks in the region, which support the wider Landcare and producer group community. These groups deliver an enormous amount of activity, funded from a range of sources. Through this core capacity support, many outcomes have been achieved:
  - Environmental examples include Western Murray Land Improvement Group's wildlife day, Corowa District Landcare Group's eradicating noisy miner workshop and climate forum, the Ricegrowers' Association of Australia's Environmental Champions project and Holbrook Landcare Network's support of the Riverine Highlands group application for threatened species support.

- As an example of long-term sustainability and community viability, Corowa District Landcare Group has been looking at long-term viability of soils through permaculture, community gardens, composting and ground cover management. Similarly, Western Murray Land Improvement Group and Holbrook Landcare Network have engaged their communities to improve nutrient, grazing and livestock management practices for more sustainable, viable and profitable local industries.

- The Aboriginal program has supported a range of gatherings to share traditional ecological knowledge, with 27 events occurring during 2015. A range of projects has been funded, including cultural heritage and artefacts displays, traditional burning projects, tools totem and tucker workshops and cultural site awareness training. An education toolbox is being developed and works crews working on country have been supported.

2. Developing a framework for investing in and supporting groups' capacity in collaboration with Landcare and producer groups across the region.
3. Establishment of the Murray LCAG to provide valuable feedback and advice to the Board alongside the Murray Aboriginal Technical Group.
4. Completion of two Community Small Grants expressions of interest rounds, between them delivering 59 grants to 38 groups. A total of 2,503 participants took part in awareness-raising / training events.
5. The Regional Landcare Facilitator (RLF) project assisted 540 people to participate in training and skills development, supported 106 groups, hosted six workshops and delivered 40 communications products.
6. The Creative Catchment Kids project (CCK) continues to be supported across the Murray region, with 30 schools registered.

## Biosecure, profitable, productive and sustainable primary industries

A key function of Murray Local Land Services is providing the region's primary producers with independent, scientifically sound production and biosecurity advice to help improve on-farm profitability, productivity and sustainability.

During 2015 our agricultural team:

- facilitated farmer discussion groups focusing on issues including irrigation, ewe management, rice production and nutrient management
- developed a program of timely and targeted communications direct to land managers and stakeholders, providing technical, agronomic, animal health and biosecurity information
- contributed to industry bodies such as the Rice Protection Working Group, which keeps abreast of rice crop protection issues
- participated in soil moisture monitoring and irrigation scheduling as part of an irrigated soils project (with NSW Department of Primary Industries, Grains Research & Development Corporation and Irrigated Cropping Council)
- established benchmark rice gross margins of \$150-200 per megalitre in the Ricegrowers' Association of Australia / Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation graduate program
- increased groundcover and improved soil condition at three priority Dustwatch monitoring sites, where soil health data and roadside surveys have shown a very low erosion risk.

In addition, our collaboration with producer groups has helped deliver increased livestock productivity through improved management practices.

During 2015, our investigations enabled producers to make informed decisions on treatment and prevention of disease.





We supported and contributed to the following sustainable farm initiatives, which engaged 917 people in events:

- producer-focused conference on beef and sheep
- sheep-related extension, including 'More Lambs More Often' and 'Ram Select' workshops, and lamb autopsy days
- feed lotting and beef marketing information sessions
- area-based ovine brucellosis campaign in conjunction with veterinary staff.

Together with NSW DPI, we also initiated an irrigation-focused climate adaptation modelling and planning project, which analyses a number of adaptation strategies and aims to improve understanding of the impacts of climate change on cash flow and equity positions.

Our biosecurity program has positively influenced livestock productivity in many ways. The program incorporates animal disease, plant pests, and disease and invasive species, and helps maintain domestic and international market access for Murray region producers. It also contributes to increased productivity through ensuring the health of animals and plants.

Throughout 2015, the animal biosecurity and welfare (AB&W) team:

- issued 183 livestock export certificates
- carried out 383 property visits as part of ongoing surveillance for diseases such as footrot and ovine brucellosis
- undertook 14 swill feeding audits as a prevention measure for foot and mouth disease
- submitted brain tissue samples to the National Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSE) Freedom Assurance Program
- completed 50 investigations for emergency animal disease
- completed 100 other disease investigations, with most identifying endemic diseases.

Disease investigations enable proof of freedom from disease, a requirement of Australian trading partners, and help us to detect new disease incursions and eradicate outbreaks early and efficiently.

During 2015, our investigations enabled producers to make informed decisions on treatment and prevention of disease. The resultant trends enabled us to alert other producers about potential disease prevalence and actions to be taken.

The National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) is Australia's system for identifying and tracing livestock and is important for disease control, product integrity and market access. Fundamental to the system is the Property Identification Code (PIC), which helps record and trace livestock movements. In 2015, the AB&W team:

- attended 85 livestock sales to audit, regulate and advise on the NLIS, and ensure industry compliance
- maintained and managed a register of 5,115 PICs
- actively managed 1,150 PICs (new, amalgamated and subdivided), including 123 new codes.

The biosecurity program also includes the management of invasive species. The invasive species and plant biosecurity team helps landholders to deliver control programs targeting wild dogs, foxes, feral pigs and rabbits.

During 2015, our team:

- guided and supported three wild dog management groups
- facilitated 1080 wild dog baiting on 53 properties covering 154,075 ha, with some landholders baiting three times
- held six training workshops to allow 61 landholders to access 1080 and Pindone poisons
- supplied 74,733 baits for 1,200 fox baiting programs
- assisted with rabbit control programs on 143 properties using 20 tonnes of bait and covering 21,447 ha
- Prepared 792 kg of pig bait for use on 16 properties covering 20,820 ha.

Our biosecurity program has positively influenced livestock productivity in many ways. The program incorporates animal disease, plant pests, and disease and invasive species, and helps maintain domestic and international market access for Murray region producers.



## Healthy, diverse and connected natural environments

The social and economic prosperity of the Murray region is underpinned by functional terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems that are healthy, diverse and connected. Over the past year, Murray Local Land Services has been working to promote evidence-based decision-making around natural resource management, and increase environmentally sustainable behaviours and practices to establish and maintain healthy, diverse and connected natural environments throughout our region.

Funding for this work is provided by the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme and the Catchment Action NSW fund. Implementation is governed by the Murray Local Land Services Board and project steering committees that include representation from a broad range of stakeholder groups, including local landholders, Aboriginal people, local government, industry, agency, technical and other community sectors.

Early regional priorities were identified in the Murray Local Strategic Plan to contribute to regional objectives under this goal. The following activities have been delivered during 2015 to give effect to these priorities.

- Theme and program level plans were developed to provide an evidence-based guide for investment.
- Systems-based projects are underway in the Upper Murray, Billabong-Yanco and Edward-Wakool areas – incorporating triple bottom line approaches to managing natural resources.
- Projects are underway to improve landscape-scale native vegetation connectivity and enhance wetlands in target areas.
- Projects are being delivered to support threatened and iconic species, guilds and communities.
- Threats to the regional conservation estate are being addressed through inter-agency activities focused on the Central Murray Forests Ramsar site.
- Travelling stock reserves are being managed for multiple outcomes including biodiversity enhancement under a significant Australian Government funded project. A monitoring and research portfolio is being maintained to facilitate adaptive management.

Key achievements for 2015 include:

- 14 projects or partnerships underway to enhance the condition of natural assets of the Murray region, spanning the full geographic breadth of the region
- 1,548 participants at awareness-raising / training events
- fact sheets, brochures and newsletters provided to 2,049 recipients
- 25 community groups or community projects assisted
- 1,623 ha of native terrestrial and aquatic habitat under new active management programs
- 500 ha of vegetation enhancement on travelling stock reserves
- reduced impacts of threats from pests and weeds over 21,714 ha, including 10,500 ha of travelling stock reserves
- trialling noisy miner control on priority travelling stock reserves
- seasonal bird survey baselines on 80 travelling stock reserve sites
- populations of five threatened species, communities or guilds enhanced
- 10 monitoring or research projects underway
- social and cultural values of natural areas enhanced in four sub-regions
- 30 non-government representatives involved in decision-making
- representation on 13 external committees and panels to provide local input to other agencies' decision-making processes and leverage benefit for the Murray region
- establishment of a stakeholder steering committee and technical working group to guide the Murray Region Travelling Stock Reserve Review.

These achievements are promoting the conservation of biodiversity and enhancing the functioning of natural systems within the region, to help managers establish and maintain healthy, diverse and connected natural environments over the coming years.

We have been working to promote evidence-based decision-making around natural resource management, and increase environmentally sustainable behaviours and practices.





Tumbarumba-based Land Services Officer, Steve Thompson, is a key member of the Murray Local Land Services team, delivering services in the upper Murray area that span many functions of the business.

While Steve is directly employed on environment team projects, achieving outcomes for threatened species and native vegetation projects, he also integrates with our biosecurity unit, investigating weed threats, trialling innovative approaches to pest control and encouraging stakeholder collaboration on emerging issues.

Steve exemplifies values related to inclusiveness and integrity, and has been an ambassador for Aboriginal cultural heritage in the upper Murray.

By living and working within the local community, Steve provides a one-stop-shop for customer queries and coordinates services to deliver outcomes efficiently and effectively.

## In our community

## Engaging Upper Murray sheep farmers

### The challenge

Murray Local Land Services identified a distinct lack of information flow to sheep producers within the Upper Murray area. There were no substantial existing networks to reach sheep producers, and we had very little connection with key landholders in this area to enable advisory services.

### Work undertaken

Originally we planned a 'More Lambs More Often' workshop to try and engage sheep producers, which was successful although we only reached a small number of attendees. A second workshop, which we supported, was cancelled due to a lack of response. A change of direction resulted in a very successful information night, attracting more than 50 participants (a good portion of the sheep producers in the Tumbarumba region), and receiving excellent feedback. This led to a third event in the area and generated interest for future similar events based on local producers' needs.

### Benefits

- Two more workshops are now planned for 2016 as a direct result of feedback from the sheep information night.
- Two Life Time Ewe Management groups have been established in the region as a direct result of the first and second events, supporting producers to source further information and work through issues that arise in applying new techniques.
- More than 50 landholders have been added to the Murray Local Land Services mailing list and will be kept informed of our events and advice.
- Feedback (written and verbal) is strongly indicating that producers are pleased that we are now working in their area.

### Location

The eastern area of the Murray region, known as the Upper Murray.



### Key achievement

A strong relationship has been established between sheep producers and Murray Local Land Services, which will provide long-term benefits to the community of Upper Murray.

Two Life Time Ewe Management groups have been established in the region and at least two more extension events are now planned for 2016 as a direct result of feedback from the sheep information night and the increased communication with Upper Murray landholders

### In collaboration with

Meat and Livestock Australia's Making More from Sheep program.

*"Great – keep updates coming. Great refreshers."*

- Sheep producer from Tooma and participant from the sheep information night

## Corowa-Oaklands Ovine Brucellosis Eradication Program

### The challenge

Ovine brucellosis is an infectious reproductive disease that causes chronic infection in rams and can significantly reduce lambing percentages. Several farms in the Corowa-Oaklands area were diagnosed with infection by Murray Local Land Services district veterinarians. While eradication is straightforward on a single farm, multiple infected properties increase the risk of reinfection.

### Work undertaken

Regional eradication programs targeting ovine brucellosis have been successful in the Victorian Mallee and around Deniliquin. With this in mind, Murray Local Land Services held a community meeting near Corowa to raise awareness of the disease, its effect on sheep production and the benefits of eradication. Attendees were asked to join a voluntary eradication program based on successful programs in other areas. Landholder support for the program was overwhelmingly positive.

### Benefits

- Program well supported by landholders.
- Promotes an increased understanding of biosecurity.
- Improved awareness of, and engagement with, Local Land Services, with all landholders in the target area being contacted by a district vet.
- The area is on track towards eradication, which would not have been possible without the collaboration between landholders and Murray Local Land Services.
- As of January 2016, 53 properties had participated in the program, with 10 testing positive, 22 negative and 21 not currently running rams.
- The program draws on skills from multiple areas of the business, including Animal Biosecurity and Welfare, Land Services and GIS.

### Location

This program includes all sheep farmers within a boundary drawn north-west of Corowa and south-east of Oaklands.



### Key achievement

The voluntary program aimed at eradicating ovine brucellosis is an excellent example of what can be achieved when landholders and Murray Local Land Services work together to solve a problem.

The program is on track for successful completion and will roll out into other areas during early 2016.

*"The brucellosis testing has been a great asset and has given us the peace of mind that we are providing healthy rams for a productive joining. Great district program."*

– Kate Schoen, Corowa

## Habitat connections in productive landscapes

### The challenge

Historic over-clearing and other impacts have substantially reduced native habitat across our productive landscapes, and fragmented the remaining patches into isolated “islands”. This limits the vegetation’s usefulness for native animals, and reduces the secondary benefits provided to landholders (for example, as shelter belts or biosecurity buffers).

### Work undertaken

Our “Connected Corridors” project aims to enhance the extent, condition and connectedness of native vegetation across the region, and is particularly targeting over-cleared landscapes. Over the last year, 10 landholders, six local councils and one community group (which has 150 members) participated in awareness-raising activities and were supported to conduct revegetation works over more than 350 ha.

### Benefits

- Improved community understanding of the value of native vegetation in productive landscapes.
- Increase in the extent and condition of native vegetation in our target area.
- Remnant vegetation patches reconnected in a critically over-cleared landscape.
- Enhancements to endangered ecological communities.
- Improved habitat extent and quality for native animals.
- Sightings of threatened species in new habitat areas.
- Community members involved in decision-making via the project steering committee.
- Participants are improving their properties for future generations.

### Key achievement

Returning land to native vegetation can be perceived as impacting on farm profitability by some producers. In partnership with local “habitat champions”, who are also highly successful farmers, we are demonstrating the multiple benefits of native vegetation to productive farms.

### In collaboration with

Australian Government’s National Landcare Programme



*“We regularly see brolgas on our property, but for the first time we now have chicks!”*

- Landholder and Connected Corridors participant.

## Mullengandra Community Creek Restoration Project

### The challenge

Mullengandra Landcare has endured a period of inactivity in which members became disengaged. A high-profile section of Mullengandra Creek was earmarked as a way to reinvigorate the group. The challenge was to remove stock and restore riparian vegetation to the area.

### Work undertaken

Mullengandra Landcare members, in conjunction with local Aboriginal work crew, Yirri Gaelin:

- prepared the site for on-ground works (for example, weed control)
- installed 1.3 km of fence to exclude stock access
- installed one alternative stock watering point
- revegetated 4 ha with 2,500 tube stock plants
- revegetated 2 ha via direct seeding.

Hosted one community tree planting day with 44 attendees.

### Benefits

- Reinvigorated Mullengandra Landcare Group after a period of inactivity.
- Introduced new members of the community to Landcare.
- Demonstrated effective alternative stock watering options.
- Demonstrated effective riparian remediation techniques.
- Demonstrated the effectiveness of different revegetation techniques, including direct seeding.
- Engaged the Aboriginal community in work on Country and increased understanding in the community.

### Location

Mullengandra  
Creek, Mullengandra

Photo courtesy  
Heather Thurnam,  
Mullengandra  
Landcare



### Key achievement

This project was as much about achieving environmental outcomes as it was increasing community participation in Mullengandra Landcare. Forty-four participants assisted with protecting and revegetating 1.3 km of highly eroded waterway, leaving a lasting legacy in the Mullengandra community.

### In collaboration with

Australian Government's National  
Landcare Programme  
Mullengandra Landcare Group  
Yirri Gaelin

*"It was fantastic to see so many families re-engaging with Landcare and enjoying undertaking the project with Yirri Gaelin."*

- Member of Mullengandra  
Landcare Group

# Office locations

## Principal office

394 Hay Rd  
Deniliquin NSW 2710  
Ph: 03 5881 1055  
Fx: 03 5881 1375

## Deniliquin

315 Victoria St  
Deniliquin NSW 2710  
Ph: 03 5880 1400  
Fx: 03 5880 1444

## Albury

931 Garland Ave  
Albury NSW 2640  
Ph: 02 6051 2200  
Fx: 02 6051 2222

## Tumbarumba

Corner Bridge and Winton streets  
Tumbarumba NSW 2653  
Ph: 02 6948 9197  
Fx: 02 6948 9150

## Moulamein

34 Sainsberry St  
Moulamein, NSW, 2733  
Ph: 03 5887 5006  
Fx: 03 5887 5022

## Corowa

74 Short St  
Corowa NSW 2646  
Ph: 02 6033 1196  
Fx: 02 6033 1943

## Jerilderie

6 Jerilderie St  
Jerilderie NSW 2716  
Ph: 03 5886 1203  
Fx: 03 5886 1410

Murray Local Land Services  
[www.murray.lls.nsw.gov.au](http://www.murray.lls.nsw.gov.au)  
1300 795 299