



Local Land
Services
Riverina

Local Annual Report 2016



Contents

Foreword	1
Riverina region at a glance	2
2016 local achievements	3
Local Land Services goals	4
Resilient, self-reliant and prepared local communities	5
Biosecure, profitable, productive and sustainable primary industries	6
Healthy, diverse, connected natural environments	8
In our community	9
Case study: Increasing awareness of on-farm biosecurity	10
Case study: Wild dog tracking begins	11
Case study: Get in the zone project	12
Case study: Gullies, grazing and groundcover	13
Office locations	14

Published by the Local Land Services
First published March 2017
ISBN: 978-0-6480656-6-1.

Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of the report January 2016 to December 2016. However, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Local Land Services or the user's independent adviser.

© State of New South Wales through Local Land Services 2017.

Foreword

2016 was a year of consolidation as we continue to deliver relevant and valued services to our customers.

Customers are always at the front and centre of our decision-making and we have a strong focus on engaging upfront when designing and delivering programs and services.

Notable highlights include:

- receiving more than 400 expressions of interest in our grants program
- over two million hectares managed for pest animal control
- a coordinated customer initiated feral pig control project with Murray and Western Local Land Services
- establishment of an innovative grant program for irrigation areas
- approval of a \$900,000 grant from NSW Office of Environment and Heritage Plains
- wanderer habitat protection with Murray Local Land Services
- the development of the Riverina Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan.

Innovation continues to be an important part in how we operate with customers seeing the benefit of incorporating innovations into business as usual activities. Examples include a strategic wild dog aerial baiting program which was developed from the wild dog GPS collaring project data, and GPS collaring of foxes and the use of real-time surveillance cameras in malleefowl habitat areas to improve management programs for pest predation. These projects are examples of using innovation to deliver efficient, cost effective, customer focussed solutions and services.

Financially Riverina Local Land Services is in a strong position and operating within our financial budgets. Our external funding from both the NSW and Australian Government has seen over three million invested in managing and protecting our natural resources through the provision of grant funding and building the capability of land managers through the provision of advisory services.

Rates funding continues to be utilised in undertaking preventative measures for biosecurity risks including surveillance activities, providing livestock health and management advice, and providing proactive pest management advice.



On the safety front, we remain absolutely committed to providing a healthy and safe working environment for our employees, our contractors and our visitors. This focus is ongoing, with more work to be done in the year ahead to continue to improve our safety performance and culture.

I thank the Board Members and our Management Team for your leadership and support and all employees for your dedication and hard work.

In particular I would like to thank Mr Sam Archer who stood down as Chair in October after a successful three-year term. Sam provided valuable guidance and strategic thinking in positioning Riverina Local Land Services to deliver customer focused services. I also want to thank our customers, stakeholders, and our community advisory groups for your continued support and valuable feedback.

With your continued collaboration and support Riverina Local Land Services will become a trusted provider of relevant and valued services.

**Rob Kelly, General Manager
Riverina Local Land Services**

Riverina region at a glance



Riverina Local Land Services is bounded by Harden in the east, Hay in the west, Hillston in the north and Lockhart in the south. The area covers around 67,000 square kilometres (6.7 million hectares) of land and is serviced by 17 Local Governments with more than 166,000 people. Wagga Wagga is the largest centre in the Riverina Local Land Services region with a population of more than 62,000 people.

The Murrumbidgee River winds through the region and is the second largest river of the Murray-Darling system. The word Murrumbidgee means 'big water' in the Wiradjuri language.

There are six unique landscapes in the Riverina Local Land Services region which are consistent with how communities relate to their landscape:

- rangelands
- irrigation areas
- riverina plains
- murrumbidgee
- south west slopes
- south west highlands.

Land use in the Riverina Local Land Services area is mainly agricultural with dry land grazing and cereal based cropping accounting for more than 80 per cent of land use. Irrigation farming in the region covers more than five per cent of the area.

Many natural assets of international and national importance are found in the area serviced by Riverina Local Land Services.

Communities in the Riverina region see agricultural production as important to the country's food security and work toward being resilient to climate variability and the changing economy.

2016 local achievements

542

PROPERTY VISITS
BY VETS AND
BIOSECURITY OFFICERS



572

GENERAL CONSULTATIONS BY
VETS AND BIOSECURITY OFFICERS



106

SALEYARD INSPECTIONS

80

LIVESTOCK EXPORT
CERTIFICATES ISSUED



1,468

PARTICIPANTS AT
TRAINING EVENTS



12,805

HECTARES PROTECTED THROUGH
VOLUNTARY CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS



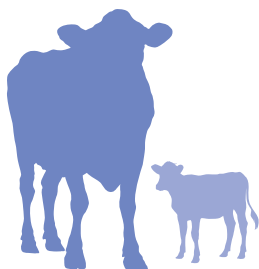
\$5.4 M

INVESTED IN COMMUNITY GROUPS AND
ON-FARM ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION



54

PROPERTIES INVOLVED
IN WILD DOG BAITING



536

PERMITS ISSUED
FOR MOVING STOCK



3.5 M

HECTARES MANAGED FOR
PEST ANIMAL CONTROL

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 Riverina Local Land Services are aligned and integrated with the four statewide goals of Local Land Services. The Riverina 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

Riverina Local Land Services is committed to making a significant contribution to the Riverina 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 Riverina Local Land Services in 2016 which was the second year of operation under the Riverina Local Strategic Plan.

Emergency management and disaster relief

Emergency management is a shared responsibility that involves prevention and preparedness to minimise the impact of emergencies, responding to emergency events and conducting recovery operations to return communities, the environment and economy to business as usual.

In partnership with NSW Department of Primary Industries, we help manage livestock disease and emergencies such as drought, bushfires and floods and biosecurity events involving plants, animals and pest insects.

Some 36 per cent of Riverina Local Land Services staff have received base-level biosecurity and emergency response training while 13 per cent of staff have been trained beyond this level.

Trained staff have assisted in four emergency responses during the year.

Emergency responses this year included the Riverina flood emergency response where staff actively worked with landholders to assess flood impact and provide help where needed.

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 in caring for Country, particularly through employment and training opportunities to build skills and capacity in land management.

More than 909 hectares of land holding Aboriginal cultural value were managed along with 24 Aboriginal sites.

Projects in the past year have included:

- Aboriginal work for the dole program
- Aboriginal cultural heritage on travelling stock reserves
- sharing knowledge - cultural values on country
- cultural burning - finding the balance.

Sustainable agriculture

Riverina Local Land Services provides high quality advisory services to landholders in the region to improve the sustainability and resilience of the landscape, agriculture industries and communities. We have a strong team that provides credible, unbiased and trusted advice and extension services built upon sound scientific knowledge and evidence based practices.

We increased the capacity of land managers to improve primary production and natural resource management and trained more than 1,200 customers at training events. More than 13,700 hectares of land was managed for sustainable grazing in the region.

Landholders were able to carry out on-ground works to revegetate degraded areas in paddocks with perennial species and participate in paddock walks to learn about local plant communities.

Projects in the past year have included:

- native vegetation management
- Riverina rangelands paddock restoration
- sandhill pine woodland restoration
- stock management areas.

We increased the capacity of land managers to improve primary production and natural resource management and trained more than 1,200 customers at training events.

More than 13,700 hectares of land was managed for sustainable grazing in the region.



Biosecure, profitable, productive and sustainable primary industries

Effective biosecurity and animal welfare is insurance to maintain market access for Riverina livestock and crop producers, now and in the future. Riverina 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

Pest animals cause serious economic losses to agricultural production, pose a risk of exotic disease, threaten the survival of many native species and cause environmental degradation. We work with landholders to minimise the impact of pests on agricultural production and the environment. In the past year district veterinarians and biosecurity officers attended 572 general consultations along with conducting 466 disease investigations.

Invasive species and plant biosecurity

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. We provided 120 education and training workshops to build the capacity of 2,086 land managers and support and help coordinate group control programs — bringing landholders together to control wild dogs, foxes, pigs, deer, plague locusts and other pests.

Working with land managers four wild dog management plans were established and, 54 properties were involved in 1080 dog baiting over an area of 207,565 hectares across the region.

Another high priority is supporting land managers and producers to manage existing weeds such as pasture weeds and environmental woody weeds, and prevent the spread of new and emerging weeds which can impact negatively on agriculture. We're committed to improving the coordination of weed management in the region.

Projects in the past year have included:

- Lower Bidgee/Lachlan pig plan
- feral fighters
- wild dog management
- rabbit control programs
- malleefowl protection programs
- RHDV K5 monitoring
- 2015-16 drought funding pest programs
- aerial survey for pest mapping
- camera trapping - Hay
- wetland conservation program
- pig trapping programs.

Protecting our agricultural industry

To support primary producers we encourage and promote sustainable agricultural practices and increase the productivity of primary production. Our biosecurity officers are empowered as stock inspectors in NSW.

Good surveillance detects any problems early and ensures the quality and safety of NSW livestock and livestock products, and access to domestic and international markets. In the past year we undertook 49 investigations to exclude an emergency animal disease.

Projects in the past year have included:

- ovine brucellosis eradication
- biosecurity planning
- farm biosecurity workshops.

Travelling stock reserves and stock management

Riverina Local Land Services manages travelling stock reserves for multiple users in the common interest of the whole community. We manage more than 85,000 hectares 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 Riverina with 536 walking permits issued in 2016 for stock movements. To control the movement of stock, Riverina Local Land Services monitors the National Livestock Identification Scheme for compliance by undertaking saleyard audits and inspections and completed 106 inspections during the year.

Some 80 livestock export certificates were issued from the Riverina during 2016 ensuring our stock are free from livestock health and disease problems. To protect market access, Riverina Local Land Services manages the Property Identification Scheme (PIC), with 275 issued during the year.



Healthy, diverse, connected natural environments

Riverina 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 Riverina 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 are supporting land managers to rehabilitate degraded habitat, manage weeds and pests, and contribute to the recovery of threatened ecological communities.

In the past year 133 voluntary conservation agreements were negotiated, protecting and conserving for biodiversity enhancement 12,805 hectares of land and 13,691 hectares received support for measures to better manage sustainable grazing.

Projects in the past year have included:

- native vegetation management
- significant wetlands in the Riverina
- paddock trees - restoration and recovery.

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 30 hectares of wetland and 247 hectares of creeklines and waterways.

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 Riverina.

In the past year we have enhanced and rehabilitated 1,320 hectares of land and protected 452 hectares 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 860 hectares of native species to assist in regeneration.

Projects in the past year have included:

- The protection and enhancement of habitat for key threatened species such as:
 - turquoise parrot
 - malleefowl
 - glossy black-cockatoo
 - plains-wanderer
 - Australasian bittern
 - sugar glider.
- the protection and rehabilitation of key endangered communities across the region such as white box-yellow box, Blakelys red gum grassy woodland and the Coolac-Tumut serpentine shrubby woodland.

Investment and partnerships

We support and engage new and existing Landcare networks and groups, community and industry partners, to undertake on-ground works and capacity building activities. Working with Landcare NSW and NSW Government, we're aiming to improve land and water ecosystem management, soil health, and native vegetation protection.

Riverina Local Land Services has allocated more than \$398,408 for the operation of local Landcare networks and the delivery of regional Landcare facilitator functions for the three-year period from 2015 to 2018.

Collaborative projects in the past year have included:

- regional Landcare facilitator
- community grants
- Landcare support by Riverina Local Land Services staff.





Our community

Our Wagga Wagga vet Emily Stearman has become something of a champion of ovine brucellosis (OB) eradication, raising awareness about the impact of OB on the fertility of rams.

From an initial breakfast meeting for producers in 2015, more than 950 rams have been examined and approximately 75 properties tested across the Stockingbingal, Marrar, Coolamon and Old Junee areas.

Emily is now called on to talk to producers groups such as Lifetime Ewe Management groups around the region, demonstrating how farmers can check their rams for signs of the disease and other problems in rams that can affect their performance.

Emily's enthusiasm and knowledge has seen her attend events to raise awareness of OB and she contributes regular updates in our newsletters.

Increasing awareness of on-farm biosecurity

"Working closely with producers to both eradicate and raise awareness of ovine brucellosis has been widely accepted. Our clients find great value in this service and veterinarians are enjoying this opportunity."

- Riverina Local Land Services, District Veterinarian, Eliz Braddon.

Location

Temora, Stockinbingal, Marrar, Coolamon and Old Junee.

The challenge

Ovine Brucellosis (OB) is a reproductive disease in sheep resulting in significant production and economic losses.

It is caused by a bacteria that infects the male reproductive organs reducing fertility.

The Australian sheep flock has moved from primary wool production to meat production. With changes in breed predilections and the introduction of ovine brucellosis accreditation programs, producers have neglected annual ram fertility assessments.

Subsequently cases of ovine brucellosis in commercial flocks have recently occurred.

In the Riverina region, some local areas were found to have confirmed infections in groups of neighbouring flocks, suggesting local hot spots of disease.

Riverina landholders in these areas raised their concerns about the apparent increase in OB detections with Riverina Local Land Services district veterinarians.

Work undertaken

We have been working with landholders to raise awareness, teach and assist with ram fertility assessment, and in the testing for ovine brucellosis aiming to significantly reduce the incidence of this disease.

Our vets discuss implementing an on-farm biosecurity plan in order to avoid future infections.



Benefits

- increased awareness of the disease
- educating producers on ram assessment
- identifying the importance of early detection.

Key achievement

More than 75 properties and 950 rams have been tested across these areas.

In collaboration with

- producers
- sheep health/production groups.

Wild dog tracking begins

"The wild dog monitoring project has given us some valuable insights into how wild dogs move around in the landscape. From a forest management point of view it has been very useful in showing the effectiveness of control programs on dog populations in particular aerial baiting."

- Forestry Corporation of NSW, Stewardship and Fire Supervisor, Rod Baker.

Location

Tumbarumba and Batlow.

The challenge

To fit 30 dog collars to wild dogs in four areas with the Riverina and Murray Local Land Services.

The dogs are trapped, weighed and a DNA sample taken. A GPS collar is then fitted and the dog is released back into the wild.

Work undertaken

- 30 dogs fitted with GPS collars
- the collar emits a signal which is tracked via satellite
- the data gathered will be used to measure movement and activity ranges and to identify daytime resting places, den sites and high incursion pathways over a 12-month period.

Benefits

During the course of the year staff ground searched with VHF receivers as well as the last known GPS point and were able to locate multiple collars.

Collars once immobile for a pre-determined period commence to send out an audible beep signal on the VHF receiver at twice the speed of a collar that is still mobile. It is with this signal that staff commence to locate the collar using the VHF receiver as a tracker into which direction the collar is located.

To date six collars have been retrieved in Bago State Forest. Four collars were retrieved from Kosciuszko National Park and three collars were retrieved from Maragle state forest.

The remaining collars will be collected early in 2017 with a final report and public meetings to be held in the middle of the year to discuss the findings.



Key achievement

To have a look at where the wild dogs have been moving through the landscape please go to the following website address:

www.lls.nsw.gov.au/riverina/biosecurity/pest-control/wild-dogs/monitoring

In collaboration with

- Murray Local Land Services
- National Parks and Wildlife Services
- Forestry Corporation NSW
- NSW Department of Primary Industries.

Get in the zone project

"The three year commitment of the project has allowed the 5 demonstration sites to identify soil constraints using precision ag tools, follow up with targeted deep soil cores and quantify strategic management practices based on the identified zone requirements, taking the results from the map to the paddock."

- GrassRoots Agronomy, Kirrily Condon.

Location

Bland, Temora, Junee, Wagga Wagga, Lockhart, Coolamon, Narrandera local government areas.

The challenge

Land managers face many production constraints which are related to differences in soil type and characteristics within paddocks and across properties.

Precision agriculture tools allow these differences to be identified and ideally overcome or proscribe a targeted input approach.

Work undertaken

Rapid and grid pH sampling was conducted on five properties across the mid district, by Precision Agriculture and a Veris unit, and targeted soil cores were collected. Delta provided Rapid Eye satellite imagery for the 2016 season.

Planning is now underway for variable rate opportunities for the 2017 season based on the results.

Benefits

- ability to identify constraints and divide paddocks into management zones
- soil cores quantified constraints and highlighted opportunities for soil health improvement
- outcomes of the project delivered at the FarmLink Open Day promoted interest in other landholders
- led to the Stay In the Zone project offering small grants of \$1,000 to 60 landholders
- large interest in the project means the project will be extended for a third year offering small grants in 2017-18
- development of Precision Ag working groups will encourage the results to continue beyond the map
- a three-year funding cycle gave the Get in the Zone project continuity to be extended into two years of small grant allocations.



Key achievement

Landholders know their paddocks can be variable, precision agriculture tools identify the boundaries and can quantify where and how to make changes for improved production.

Total investment

- \$110,000.

In collaboration with

- landholders
- Precision Agriculture
- This project was supported by Riverina Local Land Services through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme.

Gullies, grazing and groundcover

"Stabilising these gullies has not only reduced sedimentation but also restored native vegetation, provided improvements to stock and grazing management and increased groundcover."

- Riverina Highlands Landcare, Chair, Nick Austin.

Location

Various sites in the Tumut region.

The challenge

Following severe flooding events in 2010 and 2012, gully erosion was a major issue for landholders in the Riverina highlands.

These active gullies, once grassed flow lines, were devoid of vegetation and were depositing vast amounts of sediment into waterways within the Riverina highlands.

Work undertaken

The aim of this project was to work with a number of properties to fence and revegetate these degraded sites.

Works were carried out on eight properties with a total of 9.2 km of fencing erected and the planting of 4,600 locally native trees, shrubs and under storey plants.

Sites were selected using the ESR appraisal method and participating landholders signed a 10 year agreement detailing their works and also their responsibilities to manage their sites for 10 years.

Benefits

- reduced sedimentation
- increased native vegetation and habitat
- improvements to stock management and groundcover
- improved volunteer skills and participation at the Landcare nursery.



Key achievement

The community partnership project was a simple way in which a small project could access funding to undertake a locally driven natural resource management project.

Total investment

- \$87,430.

In collaboration with

- Riverina Highlands Landcare network and nursery
- McAuley Central School.

Office locations

Regional Office

Building 24
Darnell-Smith Drive
Charles Sturt University
Wagga Wagga
Ph: (02) 6923 6300
admin.riverina@lls.nsw.gov.au

Coleambally

39 Brolga Place
Coleambally NSW 2707
Ph: (02) 6954 4650
Fax: (02) 6954 4420

Cootamundra

87 Cooper Street
PO Box 189
Cootamundra NSW 2590
Ph: (02) 6940 2944
Fax: (02) 6940 2941

Griffith

Farm 217
Murray Road
Hanwood NSW 2680
Ph: (02) 6960 1300
Fax: (02) 6963 0255
PO Box 1087
Griffith NSW 2680

Gundagai

87 Sheridan Street
PO Box 21
Gundagai NSW 2722
Ph: (02) 6940 6900
Fax: (02) 6944 1867

Harden

Harden Shire Council
East Street
PO Box 145
Harden NSW 2587
Ph: (02) 6386 3954
Fax: (02) 6386 2083

Hay

56 Lachlan Street
PO Box 21
Hay NSW 2711
Ph: (02) 6990 1300
Fax: (02) 6993 3497

Henty

27 Sladen Street
PO Box 55
Henty NSW 2658
Ph: (02) 6929 3555
Fax: (02) 6929 3566

Narrandera

8 Bolton Street
PO Box 11
Narrandera NSW 2700
Ph: (02) 6958 1800
Fax: (02) 6959 3077

Temora

159 Hoskins Street
PO Box 393
Temora NSW 2666
Ph: (02) 6977 3302

Tumut

64 Fitzroy Street
PO Box 3
Tumut NSW 2720
Ph: (02) 6941 1400
Fax: (02) 6947 4149

West Wyalong

31-33 Main Street
PO Box 213
West Wyalong NSW 2671
Ph: (02) 6970 1201
Fax: (02) 6972 3356

Yanco

Yanco Agricultural Institute
2198 Irrigation Way
East Yanco NSW 2703
Ph: (02) 6951 2611
Fax: (02) 6953 7580
Private Mail Bag
Yanco NSW 2703

Young

93-93a Main Street
PO Box 46
Young NSW 2594
Ph: (02) 6381 4700
Fax: (02) 6382 3454

Riverina Local Land Services
www.lls.nsw.gov.au/riverina
1300 795 299