



Local Land  
Services  
Western

# Local Annual Report 2016



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## 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.

# Foreword

In our third year of operation, a number of significant outcomes were achieved in the Western region, but most pleasing was the fact our staff continued to strengthen relationships with ratepayers, landholders and communities by delivering the services and support that meet the diverse needs of our customers.

This support for our customers was mainly in our service areas of natural resource management, biosecurity, agricultural advice and emergency services management.

One of the highlights of 2016 was the success of the Western Region Kangaroo Management Workshop, which was an initiative of the Western Lands Advisory Council (WLAC), and brought about with the support of all the parties involved. This workshop brought key stakeholders together to address increasing grazing pressure from the high kangaroo populations and the associated negative impacts on our region's natural resources. The WLAC and Western Local Land Services are committed to continuing the momentum that has been created from this workshop, ensuring that actions are completed and all of the stakeholders are kept informed.

The management of pest animals such as wild dogs, cats, pigs and foxes was again a top priority.

In 2016, wild dog baiting programs resulted in 419,179 baits being delivered on 808 properties, which covered a total of 16,834,494 ha. Of these baits, 51,763 were delivered through aerial baiting, which was a subsidised program with landholders.

It was pleasing to have significant support and involvement from landholders and interested groups in adopting best practices for pest management.

We welcomed two locally based veterinarians, in Dr Charlotte Cavanagh based at Bourke and Dr Sophie Hemley based at Broken Hill, to the Western region. Dr Cavanagh and Dr Hemley hit the ground running and worked extremely hard at ensuring stock in the Western region remained disease and residue free, and were compliant with National Livestock Identification System regulations.



While much of the Western region enjoyed a good season, it wasn't without its challenges.

The Sunraysia area was battered by a severe storm on 11 November. Our staff did a fantastic job conducting damage assessments all week alongside NSW Department of Primary Industries staff. The assessments were used to collate a damage report including maps of properties, percentage of damage, storm trajectory and financial losses. The losses in the Western region to infrastructure, horticulture and cereal crops were estimated at \$36 M. This was a very testing time for everyone affected.

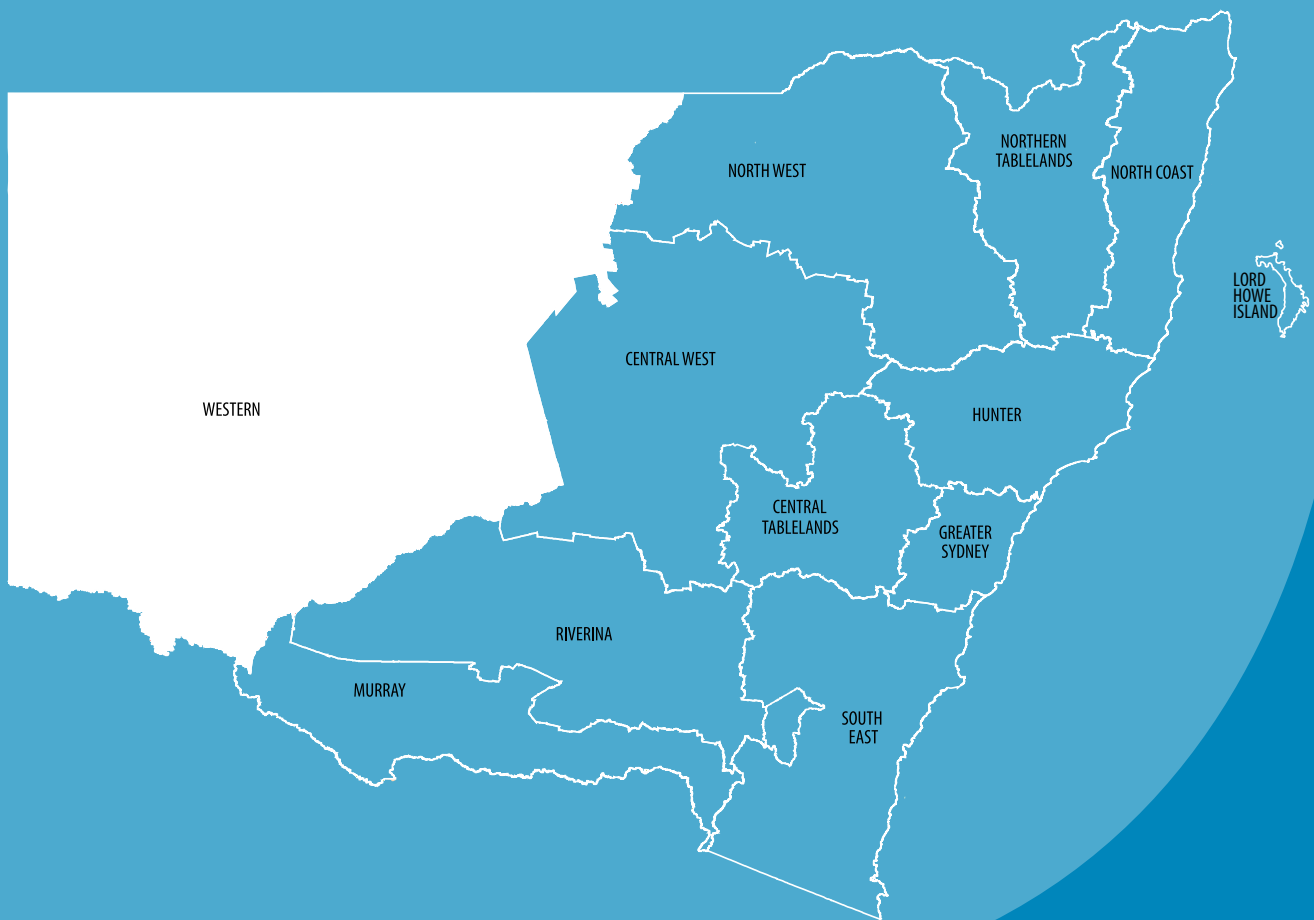
I would like to thank our staff and Board for their commitment in 2016.

This year is already well underway but I am confident that by working collaboratively with our customers and stakeholders we will continue to provide our core services and achieve our strategic goals.

**Tom Hynes**

**Chair, Western Local Board (2014-2016)**

# Western region at a glance



Western Local Land Services is vast, covering 40 per cent of the state. It is larger than Victoria and Tasmania combined, but despite its size, only 45,000 people call it home. Approximately 13 per cent of these are Aboriginal – which is significantly higher than the national average of three per cent. The majority of the population resides in Broken Hill, followed by Cobar, Balranald, Bourke, Hillston, Brewarrina and Wentworth.

The Western Local Land Services team of 52 staff, who are spread across 12 locations throughout Western NSW, deliver a wide range of projects to support local communities.

The region is renowned as one of the most diverse rangeland areas in Australia, which has been shaped by highly variable and unpredictable climatic conditions. Periods of drought are common, along with other extreme weather events like summer storms. Annual rainfall is highest towards the north-east and lowest to the west, averaging 411 millimetres at Brewarrina to 260 millimetres in Broken Hill.

Native flora and fauna are equally diverse in the Western region, having adapted to low rainfall and fluctuating temperatures. However, like other rangelands in Australia, the majority of small to medium sized ground dwelling marsupials have dramatically reduced – even become extinct – over the years, yet the presence of introduced

and pest animals like goats, feral pigs, wild dogs, foxes and rabbits have dramatically increased.

While the soil and climate is largely unsuitable for intensive farming, the region still supports a wide range of other agricultural industries. Sheep, cattle and goat grazing is common throughout, while cotton, horticulture, viticulture and cereal production occur in southern parts. Carbon farming has emerged in recent years, with carbon projects increasing in number and type in north-eastern areas.

Approximately 95 per cent of the Western region remains uncleared, however the condition of the landscape is variable due to the impacts of total grazing pressure and changes to fire regimes. Major landscape issues include loss of groundcover, resulting in reduced pastoral and agricultural productivity, increased invasive native scrub, erosion and loss of landscape function and habitat modification.

The region is largely Crown Lands administered under the *Western Lands Act 1901*. This is a unique institutional arrangement in NSW and has had some significant implications for land management. For example, unlike other Local Land Services regions, the majority of travelling stock reserves in the Western region are proclaimed over Western Land's leases and administered by the Western Lands Commissioner.



# 2016 local achievements

MORE THAN

800

PROPERTY VISITS BY VETS  
AND BIOSECURITY OFFICERS



197

GENERAL CONSULTATIONS BY  
VETS AND BIOSECURITY OFFICERS



69

PROPERTY IDENTIFICATION  
CODES ISSUED



83  
LIVESTOCK EXPORT  
CERTIFICATES ISSUED

1,506

PARTICIPANTS AT  
TRAINING EVENTS



94,808

HECTARES MANAGED FOR NATURAL  
RESOURCE OUTCOMES



\$3.7 M

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

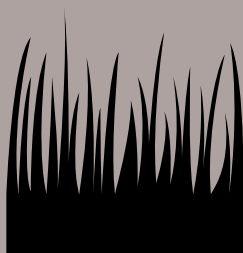


808

PROPERTIES INVOLVED  
IN WILD DOG BAITING

945

HECTARES OF NATIVE  
SPECIES PLANTED TO  
ASSIST REGENERATION

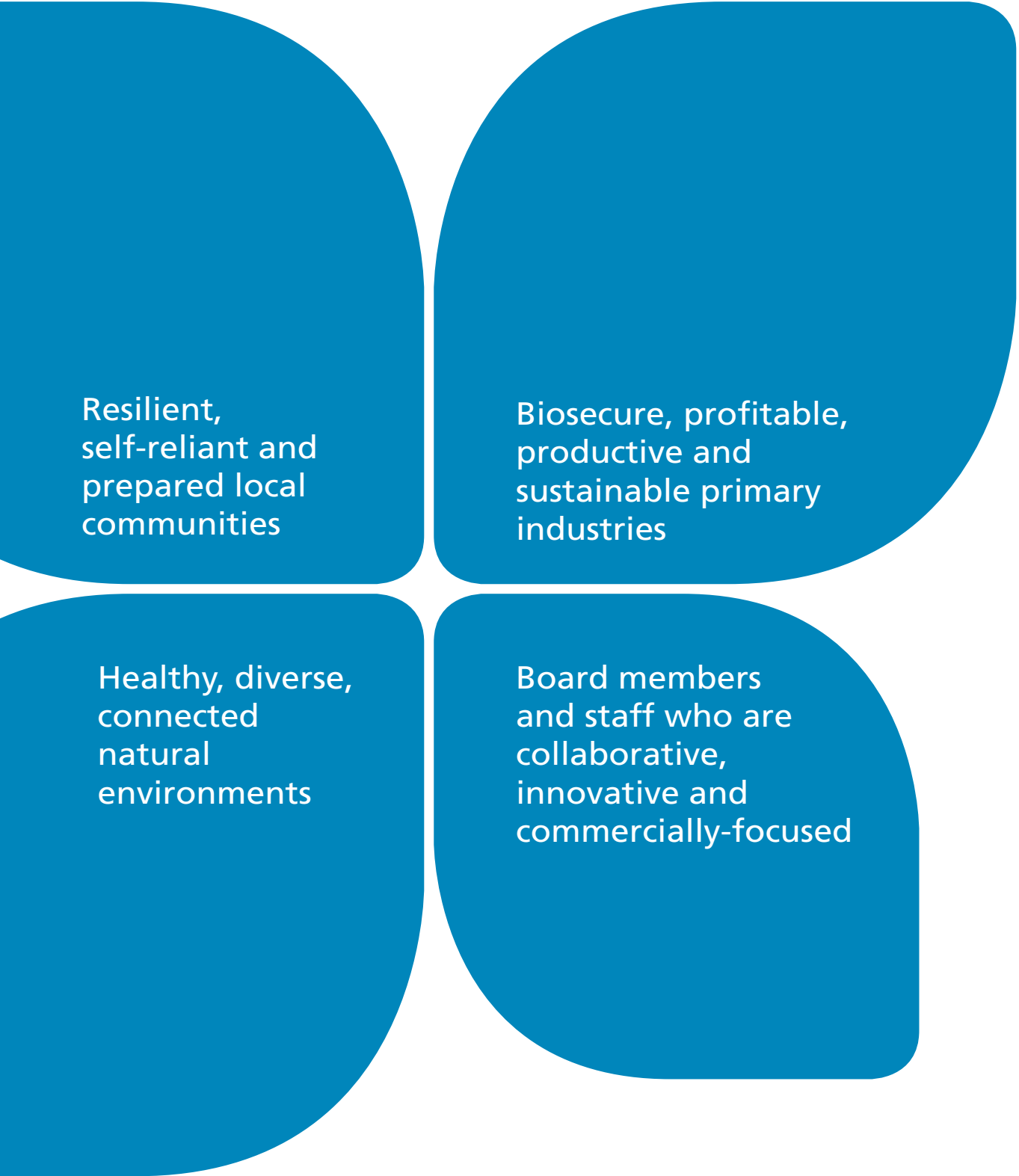


22 M

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

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

More than 80 per cent of Western Local Land Services staff have received base-level biosecurity and emergency response training while 45 per cent of staff have been trained beyond this level.

Thirteen trained staff assisted in two emergency responses during the year.

One of the emergency responses was in the Sunraysia area after a severe storm on 11 November 2016. Staff conducted damage assessments for a week following the storm, with the losses to infrastructure, horticulture and cereal crops estimated at \$36 M.

#### 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 42 ha of land holding Aboriginal cultural value was managed along with two Aboriginal sites.

Projects in the past year included:

- Generating interest in a NSW malleefowl recovery group following two malleefowl information sessions in Buronga and Hillston. More than 40 landholders and community members were informed about what is and is not known about malleefowls on an ecological and conservation level, what monitoring is being done, what happens to the data, why it's important and why the malleefowl is special and worth protecting.

## Sustainable agriculture

Western 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 1,506 customers at training events. More than 152,782 ha of land was managed for sustainable grazing in the region.

Some of the training opportunities landholders had in the Western region included the land and water management workshops held in Ivanhoe and Cobar and a tactical grazing management workshop held in Balranald.

*We increased the capacity of land managers to improve primary production and natural resource management and trained more than 1,506 customers at training events.*





# Biosecure, profitable, productive and sustainable primary industries

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

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 attended 197 general consultations along with conducting 64 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 six education and training workshops to build the capacity of 174 landholders 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 two wild dog management plans were established and, 808 properties were involved in 1080 dog baiting over an area of 16,834,494 ha 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:

- The Western Walkabout Native Plant Identification and Management workshop series. Participants learned how to identify native plants, the benefit of retaining native plants on their properties and how to manage these plants to benefit productivity.

## 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.

## Travelling stock reserves and stock management

Western Local Land Services manages travelling stock reserves for multiple users in the common interest of the whole community. We manage more than 95,000 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 Western region with 26 walking permits issued in 2016 for stock movements.

To control the movement of stock, Western Local Land Services monitors the National Livestock Identification Scheme for compliance by undertaking saleyard audits and inspections.

Some 83 livestock export certificates were issued from the Western region during 2016 ensuring our stock are free from livestock health and disease problems.

To protect market access, Western Local Land Services manages the Property Identification Scheme (PIC), with 69 issued during the year.



## Healthy, diverse, connected natural environments

*Western Local Land Services staff work hard to bring landholders and 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 Western 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 83 voluntary conservation agreements were negotiated, protecting and conserving for biodiversity enhancement 171,825 ha of land and 152,782 ha received support for measures to better manage sustainable grazing.

### 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 21,735 ha of wetland and 202 kilometres of streambank protected from grazing.

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 Western region.

In the past year we have enhanced and rehabilitated 5,884 ha of land and protected 166,915 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 945 ha of native species to assist in regeneration.

### 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.

Western Local Land Services has allocated more than \$744,000 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:

- The Western Walkabout Native Plant Identification and Management workshops series, organised by Western Local Land Services with support from Western Landcare and NSW Environmental Trust,
- On-property field day at Wyndham Station organised through the Western Division Resilient Landscapes Project, which is a partnership between Western Local Land Services and Soils for Life.







## Our community

Western Local Land Services staff enjoyed seeing many familiar faces and meeting some new landholders and community members at the Bourke Show in April 2016.

Events like local shows, field days and expos gives our staff the perfect chance to keep in touch with landholders and support local communities that rely on these events.

At the Bourke Show, our staff offered demonstrations of the Spatial Hub software program and canid pest ejectors, provided information on incentives program funding and on-property erosion management.



# On-farm biosecurity field day

*Experts from Western Local Land Services and Livestock Biosecurity Network (LBN) presented to landholders on a number of important issues surrounding biosecurity and the associated impacts if not managed properly.*

## Location

Devon Station, east of Topar.

## The challenge

To engage with local landholders on a number of important issues and inform them of the products and services Western Local Land Services offer.

Topics included an overview of biosecurity at a national, industry and on-farm scale, National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) compliance and animal health and disease investigation.

## Work undertaken

Experts from Western Local Land Services and Livestock Biosecurity Network (LBN) presented to landholders on a number of important issues surrounding biosecurity and the associated impacts if not managed properly.

Along with the field day, landholders were also able to collect baits for pest control, which was positively received.

## Benefits

- getting a good group of landholders, many of whom Western Local Land Services have limited contact with, to present to in a relaxed environment
- increasing knowledge in a number of important areas such as animal health, pest management and the importance of NLIS in biosecurity
- gaining first hand feedback from landholders which can be used to tailor training sessions, workshops and field days to meet their needs
- giving landholders a chance to meet a range of Western Local Land Services staff, including its two District Veterinarians, Dr Charlotte Cavanagh and Dr Sophie Hemley.



## Key achievement

Dr Cavanagh and Dr Hemley performed a sheep post mortem demonstration as part of a discussion around the process Local Land Services Veterinarians follow when investigating stock death and disease.

Important topics such as what signs to look for in stock, what information to collect and safety precautions to take when around sick and deceased stock were all covered and will assist veterinarians reach a prompt and accurate diagnosis for landholders.

At the request of landholders, they also demonstrated how to palpate a ram's testes to test for brucellosis.

## Total investment

- \$300 and staff time.

## In collaboration with

- Livestock Biosecurity Network
- private landholders.

*Pictured: Western Local Land Services District Veterinarian, Dr Charlotte Cavanagh, demonstrates how to assess rams for brucellosis at the on-farm biosecurity field day that was held at Devon Station, east of Topar.*



# Fish nursery project on Tar-Ru land

*The aim was to promote the development of productive nursery habitats for native fish and to monitor the effectiveness of this management intervention for juvenile populations of flow-pulse specialists.*

## Location

Tar-Ru land wetlands.

## The challenge

The feeding behaviour of adult carp damages water quality and can impact on plant and plankton emergence, thus reducing the suitability of wetlands as native fish nurseries.

The aim was to promote the development of productive nursery habitats for native fish and to monitor the effectiveness of this management intervention for juvenile populations of flow-pulse specialists.

## Work undertaken

The installation of temporary carp exclusion screens on the inlets of two wetlands, organised by Western Local Land Services in partnership with NSW Department of Primary Industries resulted in water quality improving as adult carp feeding behaviour damages water quality.

The wetlands were totally dry when the temporary carp exclusion screens were erected, which helped the habitat and aquatic communities become established.

## Benefits

- enhanced water quality
- less turbidity (reducing light penetration and photosynthesis)
- aquatic plant establishment and density
- more juvenile fish utilising the site
- increased stakeholder knowledge and understanding of native and pest fish, aquatic habitat and water management
- increase capacity for local Aboriginal natural resource management stakeholders.



## Key achievement

Water quality and native fish species have benefited significantly from carp exclusion.

These projects could serve as a template for further use of adult carp fencing for achieving positive results within regulated river areas and wetlands.

## Total investment

- \$14,567 for the carp exclusion fencing.

## In collaboration with

- NSW Department of Primary Industries
- Tar-Ru Aboriginal land managers
- private landholders.

*Pictured: A temporary exclusion screen at Thegema Lagoon north of Wentworth prevents adult carp from entering the wetland.*

# Predator program – spring baiting

*Western Local Land Services coordinated the delivery of 103,425 baits across 230 properties which covered an area in excess of 900,000 ha.*

## Location

Western region.

## The challenge

Wild dogs and foxes are a significant problem in Western NSW, preying on livestock and causing losses to productivity and profitability at the farm gate.

This project is about coordinating landholders and groups to achieve landscape scale outcomes in predator control.

## Work undertaken

Western Local Land Services coordinated the delivery of 103,425 baits across 230 properties which covered an area in excess of 900,000 ha.

Pest management and Landcare groups across the region had direct input into the development of the coordinated program.

Landholders were subsidised 50 per cent of the cost of bait material, with some landholders and groups opting to provide some or all of their own baits.

In a program that was interrupted by rain events, 71 properties participated in aerial baiting over inaccessible country and a further 159 participated in ground baiting.

## Benefits

- decrease the number of wild dogs and foxes in the Western region
- increased production and profitability for landholders
- increased native species protection and groundcover
- landholders increasing their skills and knowledge to manage wild dogs and foxes
- decrease damage to native and domesticated animals and vegetation
- support development and participation of groups across the region.



## Key achievement

The strategic and coordinated predator program provides the best approach to the reduction of wild dogs and foxes in the Western region.

All stakeholders had input into program development, providing the platform for a coordinated program to be delivered in difficult circumstances with multiple rain events across the region.

By continuing to build the capacity of landholders and groups, the management of wild dogs and foxes will continue to improve year on year which will provide biodiversity and production benefits to all in the Western region.

## Total investment

- \$180,000.

## In collaboration with

- NSW Farmers Association
- National Parks and Wildlife Service
- Western Local Land Services pest management groups.

*Pictured: Baits ready for use as part of the predator program.*

# Queensland fruit fly management project

*Western Local Land Services in partnership with the NSW Department of Primary Industries has invested significant resources to the management of Queensland fruit fly.*

## Location

Sunraysia region.

## The challenge

The ultimate goal is to return the Sunraysia area to a pest free environment. While this is unlikely to occur due to the large numbers of flies being detected in protocol traps and metropolitan areas having no effective control programs, it is hoped over time the pest can be managed so it causes minimal impact to fruit growers in the region.

## Work undertaken

Western Local Land Services in partnership with the NSW Department of Primary Industries has invested significant resources to the management of Queensland fruit fly.

These include the production of sterile Queensland fruit flies for use in outbreak control and area wide management systems, trap surveillance for the early detection of exotic fruit flies and providing advice on technical issues related to fruit fly management.

## Benefits

- higher quality produce and return on investments for growers
- increased awareness of Queensland fruit flies for both horticulturists and community members with backyard trees and vegetable gardens
- increased capacity for timely management decisions.



## Key achievement

A total of 34 weekly Queensland fruit fly alerts communicated to 35 stakeholders from September 2015 to October 2016, with information based on surveillance observations allowing timely management decisions to be made.

## Total investment

- \$7,600 excluding in kind support with trap installation and surveillance.

## In collaboration with

- private landholders
- NSW Department of Primary Industries
- Greater Sunraysia Pest Free Area Committee
- Agriculture Victoria.

*Pictured: A lot of great work has been undertaken to ensure the Queensland fruit fly has minimal impact in the Sunraysia area.*

# Office locations

## Balranald

P: 03 5020 1691

82 Market Street, Balranald 2715

## Bourke

21 Mitchell Street, Bourke 2835

P: 6872 2144

## Brewarrina

24 Bathurst Street, Brewarrina 2839

P: 02 6839 2047

## Broken Hill

32 Sulphide Street, Broken Hill 2880

P: 08 8087 3378

## Broken Hill Biosecurity Office

Adelaide Road, Broken Hill 2880

P: 08 8087 3378

## Buronga

32 Enterprise Way, Buronga 2739

P: 03 5021 9460

## Cobar

62 Marshall Street, Cobar 2835

P: 02 6836 1575

## Cobar Biosecurity Office

Broomfield Street, Cobar 2835

P: 02 6836 2081

## Dubbo

209 Cobra St, Dubbo NSW

P: 02 5852 1204

## Hillston

180 High Street, Hillston 2675

P: 02 6967 2507

## Tibooburra

Briscoe Street, Tibooburra 2880

P: 08 8091 3306

## Wanaaring

Vicary Street, Wanaaring 2840

P: 02 6874 7749

## Wentworth

1 Silver City Highway, Wentworth 2648

P: 03 5027 3064

## Wilcannia

43 Woore Street, Wilcannia 2836

P: 08 8091 5070

Western Local Land Services  
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