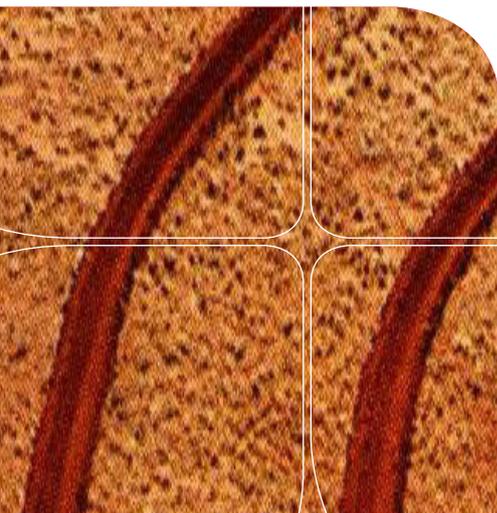
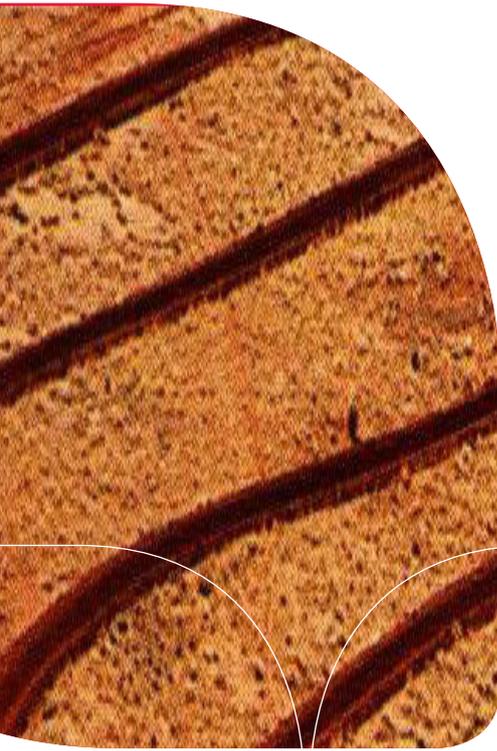




**Local Land
Services
Western**

2015 Annual Report



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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing XXXXXX. However, because of advances in knowledge, 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

Our second year of operation has been both busy and fulfilling, with our team of 55 staff delivering an increasing number of projects to support our customers in the Western Region. Through these projects, we have continued to strengthen our relationships with the community and engage on a deeper level.

Our major achievement in 2015 was the consultation and preparation for final approval of our Local Strategic Plan. The plan focuses on how we will service our customers and, as such, was developed in consultation with them. It identifies our goals and priorities for the next five years and how we will measure our success in achieving these. Importantly, it is a living document that is flexible and capable of adapting to future developments around legislation, science, technology and innovation. The next step is to start implementing a suite of programs and projects that align with our goals and priorities. Key to this will be to regularly monitor customer satisfaction and engagement in our programs and respond to their needs.

Another significant achievement was the establishment of three Local Community Advisory Groups and three Aboriginal Community Advisory Groups. These groups are comprised of representatives from a variety of backgrounds to ensure that a broad range of views from the community are considered. They play an important role in advising the Western Local Board about the effectiveness of our engagement with the community.

Biosecurity continued to be a major focus in 2015. As outlined in our strategic plan, our goal is to support our customers and stakeholders to identify, contain and manage the risks posed to the region's industries and natural resources from pest animals, weeds and disease outbreaks. Our biosecurity officers worked collaboratively with veterinarians from the Department of Primary Industries on a range of activities to support this goal. This included:

- testing over 11,000 rams for Brucellosis
- identifying and providing advice on the management of photosynthesisation and humpy back in sheep flocks
- issuing Property Identification Codes and Moving Stock Permits to protect flocks and herds from disease outbreaks.

We partnered with local pest groups and NSW Farmers to expand our wild dog baiting program across the region. We also continued to trial our innovative 1080 meat bait program which targets feral pigs. Both programs are funded through the Australian Government's Drought Recovery Program.



In recognition of the growing interest in carbon farming in the region and nationally, we hosted our first Rangelands Carbon Conference in October 2015. The conference brought together more than 160 people to learn more about this emerging industry. The conference cemented our role in assisting the industry to develop carbon farming methods that are both sustainable and appropriate for the region. The auctions under the Emissions Reduction Fund have injected significant capital into the region and benefited many landholders. These projects have also raised policy discussions regarding Invasive Native Species management in the context of carbon farming.

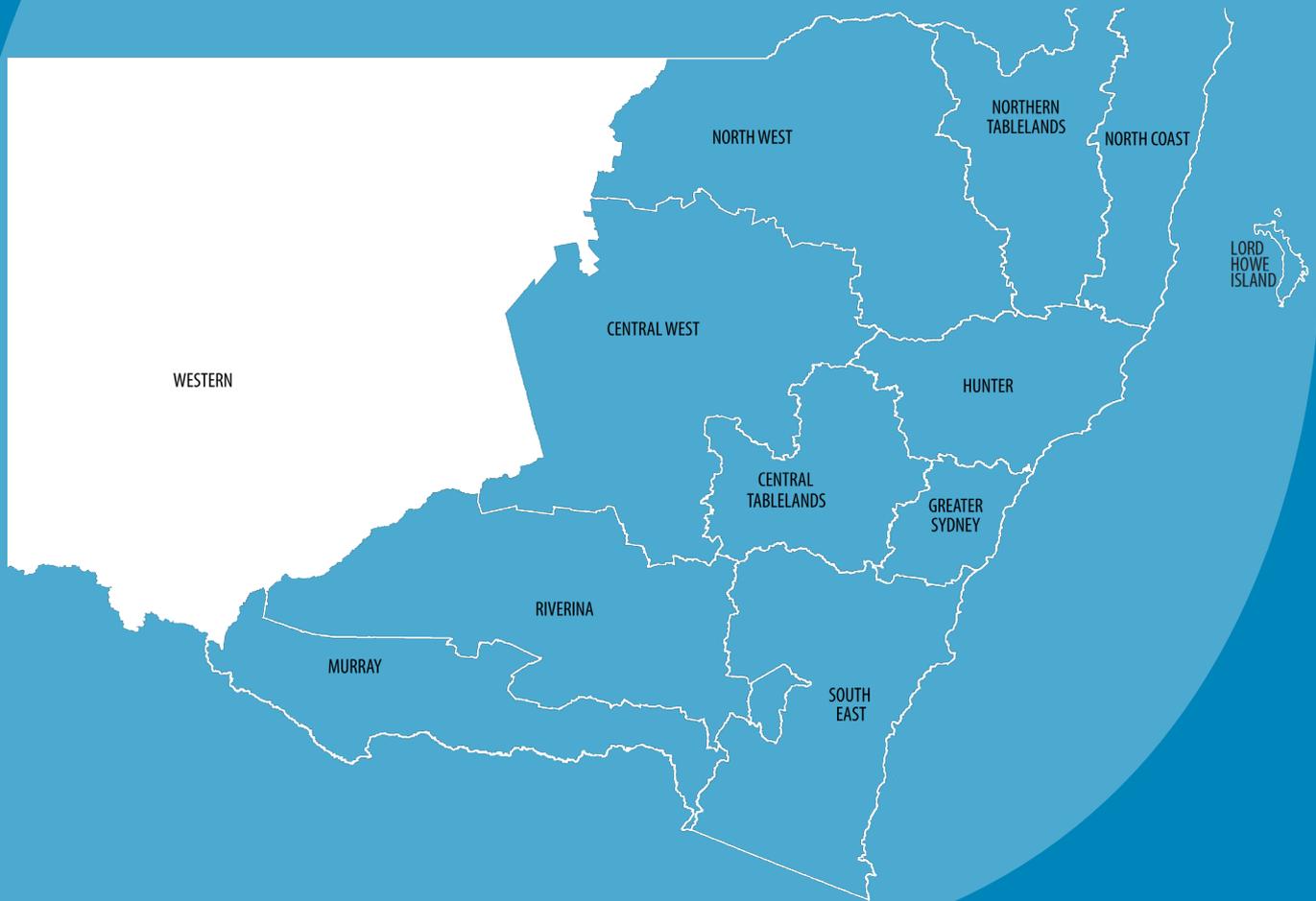
Finally we launched our Western Region Small Land Management Grants Program to support our customers undertake projects that improve the condition of our region's unique and fragile natural resource base. This program operates at a sub-regional scale and directs funds towards local priorities. It builds on our already successful Incentives Program by providing funding for a wider range of activities such as controlling pests and weeds, protecting sites of significance and building capacity to improve natural resources. It is funded through the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

While this list is not exhaustive, it highlights the diversity of the work that we undertake in the Western Region.

I would like to commend our staff and Board for their commitment during 2015. 2016 is bringing its own set of challenges but I am confident that by working collaboratively with our customers and stakeholders we will continue to achieve our goals.

Tom Hynes
Chairman
Western Local Board

Western region at a glance



Local Land Services' Western Region 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 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 and expected to increase in the future, based on climate change predictions. 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 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.

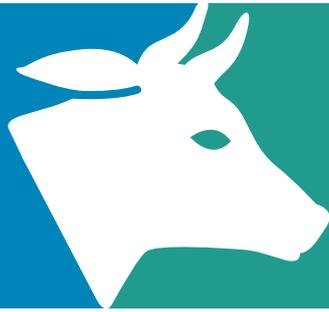
Approximately 95 per cent of the Western region remains uncleared, however the condition of the landscape is variable due to the impacts of total grazing pressure and changes to fire regimes. Major landscape issues include loss of groundcover, resulting in reduced pastoral and agricultural productivity,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

2015 local achievements

81

PROPERTY VISITS
BY VETS AND
BIOSECURITY OFFICERS



360

GENERAL CONSULTATIONS BY
VETS AND BIOSECURITY OFFICERS



59

PROPERTY IDENTIFICATION
CERTIFICATES ISSUED



386,571

DOG BAITs WERE ISSUED

296

PARTICIPANTS AT
TRAINING EVENTS



180,000

HECTARES PROTECTED THROUGH
VOLUNTARY CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS



8,172

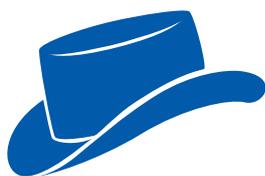
BAITS ISSUED FOR FOX BAITING
PROGRAMS

40

LIVESTOCK EXPORT
CERTIFICATES ISSUED



48



TRAINING DAYS AND WORKSHOPS
HELD

726

KILOGRAMS OF 1080 AND
PINDONE CARROTS PREPARED



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 the Western Local Land Services are aligned and integrated with the four state-wide 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 state-wide goal.

Resilient, self-reliant and prepared local communities

Agricultural production

We assist primary industries through advisory services and support to agriculture, including information on:

- farm management
- land capability
- cropping
- pastures
- mixed farming
- horticulture
- seasonal conditions

Our achievements in 2015 include:

- holding 26 workshops, field days and other training events
- 180,000 ha of land managed for sustainable grazing

Emergency management and natural disaster relief

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

We also work alongside other agencies to provide support in emergencies where agricultural industries are impacted, including natural disasters such as flood and bushfire.

We help build landholders capacity to plan, prepare, respond and recover from such events

- three staff identified in the regional Emergency Response Team that are trained to the applied level
- 15 staff trained to the induction level
- four staff trained to the applied level
- one staff trained beyond the applied level
- one training exercises conducted by the region
- four staff participated in an emergency response.

Agricultural production

Emergency Management and natural disaster relief

Drought assistance and other natural disaster relief

Aboriginal communities

Drought assistance and other Natural disaster relief

We help people to prepare for dry times and the impacts of climate change, and play a key role in producing regional season conditions reports.

Our achievements include:

Implemented Australian Government's Drought Recovery Program funding to help Western landholders manage the impacts of wild dogs, feral pigs and foxes during dry times.

Aboriginal communities

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

Our achievements include:

- implemented Aboriginal cultural practices over 88,271 ha.

Biosecure, profitable, productive and sustainable primary industries

Biosecurity

Biosecurity is the protection of the environment, economy and community from the impacts of pest and diseases. We work with landholders, industry and the community to minimise biosecurity risks and their impacts on agricultural production, international market access or environmental health.

Our achievements include:

- 27 percent of staff with training in emergency management/biosecurity
- 22 training events for landholder biosecurity and animal health capacity building.

Livestock health

We deliver frontline livestock health and disease surveillance services in NSW. Our biosecurity officers in conjunction with veterinarians from the Department of Primary Industries deliver a range of national state and local programs, all aimed at safeguarding market access and improving livestock productivity. Our focus with livestock health is:

- emergency disease prevention
- preparedness and response
- advisory and diagnostic services
- disease surveillance and reporting
- residue investigation and management
- certification
- traceability systems such as the National Livestock identification system (NLIS).

Our achievements in 2015 include:

- 360 general consultations by vets and biosecurity officers including field visits, office consultation and phone calls
- 40 livestock export certificates issued
- nine EFT specialist animals biosecurity officers (as at December 2015)
- 59 PICs issued
- 63 PICs that were modified.

Stock management and identification

We administer permits for moving and grazing stock on public roads and travelling stock reserves (TSRs).

We also administer a variety of stock identification systems including property identification codes and branding, earmarking and advice on NLIS.

Our achievements in 2015 include:

- 13 permits issued for moving stock.

Protecting our agricultural industry

Our biosecurity officers are empowered as stock inspectors in NSW. Good surveillance detects any problems early and ensure the quality and safety of NSW livestock and livestock products, and access to domestic and international markets.

Our achievements in 2015 include:

- Eight investigations to exclude an emergency animal disease
- Eight sudden death investigations.

Pest animals and insect control

Pest animals and insects 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.

We provide education, training and support and help coordinate group control programs – bringing landholders together to control wild dogs, foxes, pigs, plague locusts and other pests.

Our achievements in 2015 include:

- 645 properties involved in wild dog spring baiting
- 21,297,676 ha of pest animal control measures
- 22 training and workshop days aimed at building the capacity of land managers to undertake effective invasive species management
- 180,000 ha of pest plant control measures implemented.

Biosecurity

Livestock Health

Stock management and identification

Pest animals and insect control





Healthy, diverse, connected natural environments

Natural resource management

Healthy ecosystems underpin successful, productive primary producers and communities.

Through investment from the NSW and Commonwealth governments, we support a healthy ecosystem across the landscapes of NSW.

We help landholders and communities improve the quality of our land, soil, vegetation and water through:

- grants and funding for on-ground projects
- partnerships
- training and education.

Our achievements in 2015 include:

- 38 conservation covenants or other agreements attached to title negotiated
- 63 voluntary conservation agreements negotiated
- 622,463 ha of land protected
- 2,030 ha of land treated and/or protected from soil erosion by engineering works
- 180,000 ha of land managed for sustainable grazing.

Native vegetation

Native vegetation benefits both from on farm production and environmental health. Healthy native vegetation can increase land values and productivity while reducing operating costs. We work with land managers to develop native vegetation clearing consents,

Our achievements for 2015 include:

- 68,600 ha of terrestrial native vegetation protected by fencing
- 64.8 km riparian vegetation protected.



Natural Resource Management

Native vegetation



Local Land Services Western Region's Amy Gunn and her husband, Sam have been using satellite imagery from the NRM Spatial Hub on their property near Condobolin, to support new water spreading and fencing projects.

Local Land Services Western Region is a partner in the NRM Spatial Hub through the Ranglands NRM Alliance. www.nrmhub.com.au

Image: Sally Patterson

In our community

Protecting sensitive waterways

The challenge

Uncontrolled grazing has had a significant impact on the health of the Warrego River, near Bourke NSW, causing a severe decline in ground cover and habitats and an increase in erosion along its banks. Furthermore, as the stock walk through the river, the water quality has suffered. Unless the grazing is managed, these impacts will continue to worsen.

Work undertaken

Excluding stock from the riverbank was the only feasible solution to enable the vegetation, soil and water to recover. The land manager obtained funding through the Incentives Program to fence off the affected area and establish alternative watering points for the stock. In addition, as per the conditions of funding, the land manager implemented a 10-year management plan to control total grazing pressure in the long-term.

Benefits

- Grazing pressure is spread more evenly.
- Vegetation cover has increased
- Incidence of erosion has decreased
- Water quality has improved
- Terrestrial and aquatic habitats have been restored
- Stock can be mustered more effectively
- Landholder has skills and knowledge to sustainably manage the waterway
- 10-year management program in place



Key achievement

Funding through the Incentives Program has enabled the waterway to be restored into a healthy system that supports native fauna.

Total investment

\$46,812

In collaboration with

Australian Government National Landcare Programme

“A management plan is an essential tool to manage total grazing pressure effectively in the long-term” Russell Grant

Pest program pays dividends

The challenge

Wild dogs and foxes have been a problem for Rainie Weston of Marrapina, preying on stock and causing losses at the farm gate. They also threaten biodiversity in the region by attacking native animals.

Work undertaken

Over the past 10 years Rainie has coordinated a group baiting program to target these pests. There are now 11 properties in the region that work in collaboration with Local Land Services Western Region to distribute baits in autumn and spring each year. The group secured funding from Australian Wool Innovation to purchase drying racks so they can prepare enough baits for everyone.

Benefits

- Reduction in the number of wild dogs and foxes in the region
- Increased productivity by reducing stock losses
- Increased biodiversity
- Reduced predation of native animals
- Baiting is coordinated for best seasonal and breeding conditions
- Group members have increased their skills and knowledge in pest management



Key achievement

Rainie Weston is now achieving lambing percentages of over 130% and native animals such as bush turkeys have returned to Marrapina. Other landholders in the group are also achieving similar results.

Total investment

\$195,300 for regional annual baiting program

In collaboration with

Australian Government

Australian Wool Innovation

Barrier Area Rangecare Pest Group

“The only way to get on top of the issue was to work collaboratively with our neighbours” Rainie Weston

Exploring the carbon market

The challenge

Carbon farming is an industry that has developed rapidly in recent years and can provide many opportunities for land holders. There is a need for up-to-date and regionally relevant information to help them make informed decisions about whether to become involved.

Work undertaken

Local Land Services Western Region hosted the Rangelands Carbon Conference on 29 and 30 October to provide the latest facts and figures about Australia's emerging carbon economy. More than 160 people gathered to hear from a wide range of experts about a wide range of topics, such as the range of abatement methods available and the Emissions Reduction Fund.

Benefits

- Access to up-to-date and unbiased information about the carbon economy
- Access to government, scientific and industry experts in the field of carbon farming
- Case studies about how land managers are implementing carbon projects
- Understand how the Emissions Reduction fund operates
- Understand the role of the Clean Energy Regulator
- Assist the industry to develop carbon farming methods that are both sustainable and appropriate for the region.

Key achievement

Local landholders are better informed about options to diversity their enterprises.

Total investment

\$14,272

In collaboration with

Australian Government



"The carbon farming industry is continually evolving and information becomes out of date very quickly" John Gavin

Strategic approach to weed management

The challenge

Mesquite is an aggressive weed that is extremely difficult to control. Infestations of mesquite in the Broken Hill-Wilcannia area required a landscape-scale approach to prevent them from choking out native vegetation and destroying vital habitats.

Work undertaken

A strategic approach to weed management involved spraying known infestations of mesquite in the target area and use of innovative drone technology to identify and map other infestations in the surrounding area. Demonstration events will be undertaken in 2016 with local landholders to educate them about effective weed control techniques so they can tackle infestations on their own.

Benefits

- Containment of the weeds in treated areas
- Innovative approaches to mapping weed populations
- Landholders trained in weed management techniques
- Improved understanding of challenges and benefits of ongoing weed management
- Application of the management model across other parts of the region
- rehabilitation of native vegetation
- restoration of vital habitats

Key achievement

Landholders have the skills and knowledge to manage mesquite and other invasive weeds on their properties.

Total investment

\$44,200

In collaboration with

University of Sydney



“Drones have potential to be very effective in mapping weed infestations, particularly in hard to reach locations”
Mitch Plumbe

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

36 Darling Street, Dubbo 2830

P: 02 6881 3404

Hillston

180 High Street, Hillston 2675

P: 02 6967 2507

Tibooburra

Briscoe Street, Tibooburra 2880

P: 08 8091 3306

Wentworth

1 Silver City Highway, Wentworth 2648

P: 03 5027 3064

Wanaaring

Vicary Street, Wanaaring 2840

P: 02 6874 7749

Wilcannia

43 Woore Street, Wilcannia 2836

P: 08 8091 5070

Western Local Land Services

www.western.lls.nsw.gov.au

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