



Rangelands producers to help set R&D priorities

Red meat producers in the Western NSW Rangelands and South Australia's North East are invited to a forum to help drive the future direction of levy-payer funded research, development and adoption (RD&A) programs.

The Broken Hill regional consultation forum will be held in conjunction with Agfair on Friday and Saturday, 6 and 7 May. It's hosted by the NSW Central West and Rangelands regional committee of the Southern Australia Meat Research Council (SAMRC).

The event is one of a series of Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) forums around Australia set up to consult directly with sheepmeat- and grassfed beef-producer levy payers about RD&A priorities for 2017-18 that are specific to each region.

The Goat Industry Council of Australia (GICA) is also collaborating with SAMRC at Agfair to gather information on goat producers' RD&A needs.

Chair of the NSW Central West and Rangelands regional committee of SAMRC, Angus Whyte, of Wyndham Station, Wentworth, said the forum was an opportunity for sheep, cattle and goat producers to have direct input into where their levies should be directed.

'If we have strong input from producers early in setting R&D priorities, there's a much higher probability of those outcomes being adopted on ground by producers', Mr Whyte said.

'The forum is also about making sure producers are aware of all the R&D that is already being done and available to adopt on-farm.'

MLA Managing Director Richard Norton will be attending the forum to meet with producers and hear their issues first hand.

As well as having an opportunity for input into the future directions of RD&A priorities, producers will hear from a number of guest speakers on a variety of topics, including condition scoring in sheep, tools to manage total grazing pressure, and new research into labour-saving technologies such as drones.

The forum is the first NSW Central West and Rangelands SAMRC event to be held as part of MLA's new regional consultation model for RD&A investment from levies.

SAMRC covers NSW, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, as well as the sheep areas of south-eastern Queensland. Its members include sheepmeat and grassfed beef producers, MLA, CSIRO, agricultural departments, universities and agencies such as Local Land Services (LLS).

SAMRC is supported by seven regional committees, each chaired by a local producer, which gather input from local producers and producer networks on local RD&A needs.

The forum at Agfair, Broken Hill, is broken into three sessions: two on Friday 6 May and one on Saturday morning 7 May. Agfair visitors are welcome at the stand at any time across the 2 days.

Details about the new regional consultation framework, SAMRC and its members, GICA and how grassfed beef, sheepmeat and goatmeat producers can get involved are available at www.mla.com.au/About-MLA/RD-Consultation and www.mla.com.au/About-MLA/About-your-levy/Goats

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AGFAIR 2016

Broken Hill 6th and 7th May

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FIRST - BECAUSE IT LASTS.

Legal Roads Network Project

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Last year the Legal Roads Network team said a fond farewell to our team leader, Rex Miller. Rex decided it was time for him to do a little more travelling and a lot more golfing. We wish Rex well in his retirement!

Amanda Beetson has been appointed to Rex's position. Amanda brings over 20 years' experience in Crown lands administration to her new role, and she's looking forward to helping landholders in the Western Division with their legal access issues.

The Legal Roads Network team has now drawn 62 plans identifying over 13,000 kilometres of Shire road and 2713 kilometres of restricted easements to landlocked properties in the Western Division.

The project is still working in Wentworth Shire, where plans representing 90% of the shire's roads are either completed or in preparation.

We are currently working on Anabranche Mail Rd, Milpara Rd, Tooperoopna Rd, Lagoon Rd, Thegoa Lagoon Rd and Log Bridge Rd.

Landholders whose primary access is via these roads should have received paperwork outlining the actions required to ensure that legal access is provided. Landholders who have not returned their paperwork should do so as soon as possible to make sure that their access needs are addressed.

Over the next few months the team will be focusing on closing the previously dedicated Western Division Roads (WDRs) in the shires of Bourke and Cobar in cases where the road no longer accurately defines the road casement and a new, dedicated, public road has been opened in the correct location.

Affected landholders should have received correspondence from the Team over the last 6 months requesting approval to add the closed WDRs to their adjoining Western Lands Leases.

The Project Team can't stress enough the importance of landholders agreeing to adding the closed WDRs to their adjoining leases in a timely manner. This is especially the case

for landholders who have recently had land withdrawn from their leases for the dedication of public roads. If the closed WDRs are not added back to the leases, then two areas will be excluded from the lease to provide for one legal access; this is effectively double dipping.

The Team looks forward to your continued support and the timely return of paperwork so that an effective legal access system can be achieved in the Western Division.



The Western Newsletter is produced by Riverina Local Land Services with funding assistance from:

- » NSW Office of Environment and Heritage
- » Western Local Land Services
- » Riverina Local Land Services
- » Murray Local Land Services
- » NSW Trade & Investment, Crown Lands (Far West Area)
- » NSW Rural Assistance Authority

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The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (April 2016). 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 the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services or the user's independent adviser.

New Private Vet for Broken Hill: Greg Curran!

Although Greg has hung up his boots from his usual government veterinary role, he still intends to stay and work as a vet in the Broken Hill and pastoral rangelands of NSW.

So how did Greg end up in Broken Hill?

After Greg graduated from the Faculty of Veterinary Science at the University of Sydney he began work on Tarwyn Stud with Peter Andrews, where he developed an understanding of managing groundwater. He next spent 6 years working in northern South Australia on the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Campaign, where his interest in diseases of large animals in arid and semi-arid areas began.

While based in Port Augusta, Greg met and married Sheryl Litchfield. Greg then moved to Hillston to a position with NSW Agriculture that combined the roles of vet and livestock officer. This role developed his understanding of, and interest in, both sheep and cattle and the importance of production problems, including lambmarking performance (particularly with the Crossleys of Toms Lake) and grass seed damage (from barley and speargrass). During this time, anthrax raised its ugly head in sheep and pigs, with some ferocious losses. In addition, while working with Ian Lugton and Rural Lands Protection Board (RLPB)rangers, Greg demonstrated that foxes were taking large numbers of viable lambs.

Greg next moved to Cobar and the Rangelands Management Unit. This role led to a broader view of the land, its ecology, and the extraordinary variation in rainfall and temperatures seen in the Western Division. Greg also took an interest in the interactions between stock, kangaroos and pest animals, their consequences in driving drought, and the many challenges facing people living in the West.

Greg's many achievements in Cobar have included:

- understanding the many factors contributing to post-mulesing arthritis
- learning that floodplain staggers was caused by stock eating blown grass infected with soil nematodes carrying a particular bacterium that produced sweet-tasting poison in the seed head, and that this grass needed flooding and the nematodes needed the right combination of soil dryness and wetness to proliferate in the soil
- starting to see Paroo staggers in sheep, and not understanding it
- working with an extraordinary array of people and organisations to determine the cause of epidemic blindness in kangaroos—an insect-borne virus called Wallal virus.

In an unfortunate work incident while Greg was working on blindness in kangaroos, he was attacked and tortured

by three escaped convicts in Broken Hill, leading to partial blindness in his right eye. Greg moved to Broken Hill to provide better veterinary coverage of the west. This position allowed him to continue to work in many areas. Some of his many observations and achievements were as below:

- Greg worked with Keith Allison and RLPBs to keep ovine Johne's disease out of the Western Division. This meant asking people to provide records of introductions of sheep over the previous years to work out the risk of bringing the disease in from known infected areas. In an extraordinary effort, more than 98% of all people with sheep responded. Auditing of the results showed that the accounts were accurate. RLPBs then decided to advise owners on how to keep the disease out, and this strategy has been very successful for more than 20 years. The initial work was recognized by presentation of the National Farm Biosecurity Award to Keith Allison and the RLPBs.
- Seeing and describing 3D (Drooling, Diarrhoea and Death) in cattle and being unable to determine the cause. At this stage the cause of 3D syndrome has not been identified although work is continuing.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND GREG NOW?

Greg accepted a voluntary redundancy from NSW DPI in March. He will continue to live in Broken Hill, and he will work as a private vet investigating disease and reproductive problems in flocks and herds.

He can be contacted on **0439 929 638** or email **curran3gdc@outlook.com**.



Greg Curran has moved into private practice. Photo supplied by Greg Curran.

Good news for Tibooburra Aerodrome

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Tibooburra Aerodrome is vitally important to the remote communities in the far north-west of NSW. It is used by the Royal Flying Doctor Service for emergency patient transfers, as well as every Tuesday and Thursday for health clinics and doctors' visits to the Tibooburra Hospital. The airstrip is also used by the NSW Police Air Wing, State Emergency Services, Rural Fire Service, Australian Plague Locust Commission, and other important services, including tourism operators.

Recognition by the NSW Government of the importance of this Aerodrome has resulted in funding being approved under the 2015–16 State Budget. These funds will



Tibooburra Aerodrome is being resealed this April. Photo by Tiff Brown

enable the existing bitumen runway to be resealed, ensuring that the Aerodrome continues to comply with Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) standards.

State Asphalt Services Pty Ltd, a Sydney-based company, has been awarded the \$230,000 contract following a public tender process. Work is proposed to get under way in early April 2016 and to be completed by the end of the month. It will involve airstrip earthworks; drainage works; resealing the bitumen runway, apron and taxiway surfaces; and line

marking of the runway and taxiway surfaces.

The runway will hopefully be closed for less than 7 consecutive days during the works period.

The aerodrome's other runway, a 1532-metre dirt-surface landing strip, may be able to be accessed with prior notification during the works period.

Both runways are inspected annually to comply with CASA requirements and are regularly maintained.

Farewell from Dan Salmon at Deniliquin

After nearly 43 years as a Veterinary Inspector, District Veterinarian, Senior District Veterinarian and Regional Veterinarian I have finally pulled the pin! I've worked for nine Pastures Protection Boards, Rural Lands Protection Boards, Livestock Health and Pest Authorities and LLS during that time.

It's been a lot of fun, and I've also managed to get a few things done. When I started off in 1973 there was still a bit of tuberculosis in the Riverina. A third of the cattle herds had bovine brucellosis, half the sheep flocks had footrot, and a third of the ram flocks had ovine brucellosis. Now there is none of this—or near enough to it. We also had a few outbreaks of avian influenza, Newcastle disease and equine influenza that we were able to eradicate. And we also managed to get rid of several chemical residue problems and enzootic bovine leucosis from the dairy herds of the region.

As my use-by date approached I was fortunate to have the opportunity to establish a team of bright and enthusiastic younger District Veterinarians. So I believe I'm leaving the livestock industries of the Riverina in better hands than ever to continue the century and a half of livestock health control that we have been able to achieve. There has been plenty of hard work and a few tough times, but I'm quite proud of what we have been able to achieve and I believe that the livestock disease situation is enormously better than it was. Having said that, there's still plenty to do to make sure that the job doesn't go backwards. There are plenty of problems that we don't have now that will cause untold cost and pain if we let them get going. Constant vigilance and early action when something goes wrong is the only way to stay ahead of the game!

The people that I have worked with—producers, directors, vets and our own



Dan Salmon is retiring after nearly 43 years of service. Photo supplied by Dan Salmon

staff—have made for a pleasant and rewarding career, and I hope that the next generation will have the same. Having spent so long learning what I now know, I'm not going to walk away completely. My wife Roseanne and I are taking a gap year to continue our exploration of Australia and the rest of the world, and I hope to get a few little jobs with industry, universities and government to keep my hand in. So it could be that this is not the last word from Dan!

Ramping up Bottle Bend

By Cedelia Duke
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Bottle Bend Reserve is a Crown reserve for 'nature conservation, rural services and public recreation' on the Murray River near Buronga. The reserve, which is currently managed by DPI – Lands, has special importance in the local landscape because of both its social and its environmental values. It provides an environment for the community to enjoy passive recreational activities (such as fishing), contains many significant Aboriginal cultural heritage sites, and provides opportunities for environmental education and outdoor experiences.

Bottle Bend Reserve has long been used as a boat-launching location

because of its low-lying nature and ease of access to the water. River users have been accessing the river simply from the river bank.

DPI – Lands has worked with Wentworth Shire Council to enable the council to soon start building a new \$200,000 boat ramp. This will improve user safety by providing a more convenient access point to popular fishing spots, further enhancing the reserve.

Construction should take about 12 weeks and is set to start in April. Proposed works include an upgrade of the existing access track and parking area, a new precast concrete boat ramp with associated earthworks and erosion control, a crushed-rock access track to control access to the site, stormwater drainage swales and culverts to control stormwater, and restriction of uncontrolled access within part of the reserve by

decommissioning other informal access tracks.

Council says the project would not have been possible without the support of DPI – Lands and acknowledges that the project has been a joint effort.

DPI – Lands is also currently looking to establish a local community trust to manage Bottle Bend Reserve into the future. Hopefully this will lead to local 'ownership' when it comes to ongoing management works and activities there. Such activities would include environmental watering, upgrading of the fences around Aboriginal heritage sites, and the addition of interpretative signage at these sites.



Bottle Bend Reserve is to get a new boat ramp. Photo by Ian Kelly

Landholders working together to control boxing glove cactus at Broken Hill

By David Gee
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Boxing-glove cactus is a grey-green shrub about 1 to 1.5 metres tall that occurs mainly in the drier inland regions of Australia. At present it is not common or widespread, but over the last few years populations in NSW have rapidly increased in density and area. It is now locally common in and around the mining settlements of Broken Hill, Cumborah, Grawin and Lightning Ridge in NSW. If it is allowed to spread, it could replace more useful species and affect the pastoral value and natural biodiversity of semi-arid plant communities.

Plants can consist of cylindrical to club-shaped stem segments (also called 'pods') or flattened and twisted segments that often resemble boxing gloves, and small, loosely attached segments with sparse, short spines. The terminal segments constantly become dislodged, and they either take root around the mother plant to form dense thickets or are dispersed by animals or floodwaters before rooting.

This cactus injures both humans and animals and drastically reduces the carrying capacity of affected land; this has certainly been the experience of landholders in the Broken Hill area.

With the help of a number of concerned landholders, a joint project between DPI – Lands and Western LLS has been established to identify and map the extent of the boxing glove cactus infestation over several properties to the north of Broken Hill. Meetings with affected landholders were held earlier this year, and the areas of infestation have been mapped by using GPS technology.



Seed heads of the boxing glove cactus. Photo by David Gee



Small segments (pods) of cactus. Photo by David Gee

DPI – Lands is now discussing options with Western LLS staff at Broken Hill to support the group of Broken Hill landholders affected by this cactus outbreak. The hope is that with an effective control program the cactus will be eradicated or controlled. Landholder experience suggests that control is best achieved by walking through the area in a grid pattern with a backpack spray unit. A mixture of diesel and Access® has proved to be an effective herbicide.

The topography and landscape of the Barrier Ranges make effective control both costly and time consuming. However, if this problem isn't addressed it has the potential to explode and

spread further. As the cactus is found on rocky hillsides in the ranges, it tends to blend in with the local rock and pebbles, making it very difficult to see the small pods. The pods can be smaller than a 5-cent piece. Consequently, even though an area may have been treated, it requires follow-up inspections and treatments to ensure that the cactus has been eradicated.

For further information contact David Gee, Senior Rangelands Management Officer, DPI – Lands on (03) 5051 6204 or Mitchell Plumbe, Senior Land Services Officer – Agribusiness, Western LLS on (08) 8082 5204.



Local Land Services

Calls to join the EMU™ program

Western LLS is calling for **expressions of interest** from landholders to participate in a pilot **Ecosystem Management Understanding (EMU™) program**.

EMU™ is a land management program for pastoralists and other semi-arid-land managers that is designed to help them recover their land and enhance productivity. The program has been running successfully for about 15 years in the semi-arid rangelands of Western Australia, the Northern Territory and northern South Australia and is likely to have application in western NSW.

EMU™ introduces land managers to the ecological management of landscapes by learning to recognize and read landscape processes, condition and trends.

The program helps managers to identify the underlying causes of land management issues and to develop solutions. After working through the EMU™ approach, landholders are guided in developing project proposals targeting land recovery and increased productivity.

For more details on the EMU™ approach, see www.emulandrecovery.org.au

Western LLS is planning to run property-planning workshops later this year that will pilot the EMU™ approach in NSW. The workshops will be held on pastoral properties, where groups of participants will be led through the EMU™ process by trained facilitators. EMU™ workshops run over 3 days; the actual timing will be negotiated with the participants.

Participating landholders are ideally drawn from neighbourhood groups, but this is not essential. All planning information remains confidential and stays with the participant.



A productive flat being encroached on by gully erosion. The EMU™ process focuses on repairing and preserving productive parts of the landscape. Photo by Paul Theakston

If you're interested in participating you will need to fill in an Expression of Interest form. Please call Paul Theakston, Rangeland Rehabilitation Officer, (02) 6836 1575 or 0428 259 231 to discuss the program, or call your local LLS office for more details.



Welcome to all the new readers of the Western Newsletter.

The Newsletter has been produced over many years by various state agricultural agencies and distributed to landholders in western NSW. With an increased readership distribution, the Newsletter is now also being mailed to landholders in areas other than the far west.

If you do not wish to receive the Newsletter or you need to update your details, please complete the following and return it to:

Sally Ware, Editor, Western Newsletter, PO Box 21, Hay, NSW 2711 or fax to (02) 6993 3497 or email sally.ware@lls.nsw.gov.au

Please change my details Please remove me from the mailing list

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Putting mesquite on the map

Western LLS is trialling an innovative technique to map infestations of one of the most aggressive weeds in the Western Region: mesquite.

The trial is being run at a site north of Broken Hill and involves the capture of high-resolution, geo-referenced imagery using a fixed-wing drone.

This imagery will be analysed by the University of Sydney using specialist software to work out whether plants can be identified.

Senior Land Services Officer Mitchell Plumbe said it's challenging to identify the location of weeds like mesquite in the Western Region using current methods owing to the large expanses

of land and the difficulty in accessing some areas.

'This results in target plants invariably escaping treatment and greatly increases treatment costs, as large areas must be searched to find and treat weed plants,' Mr Plumbe said.

'The use of a drone will overcome these access and scale issues.

'If the method is successful and cost effective, landholders will be able to better target their weed control activities, which will significantly reduce the labour costs for treatment.'

This trial builds on work done by the Australian Centre for Field Robotics

at the University of Sydney, where algorithms were developed to identify mesquite from other vegetation and provide a map of its distribution.

'While Mesquite in the Western Region has not yet reached the level of infestation seen in other areas of Australia, recent seasons have resulted in extensive germination events,' Mr Plumbe said.

'It poses a great risk to both biodiversity and production within the Western Region, having plagued local graziers and land managers for over 50 years.'

Results from this trial are expected to be received by mid-2016.



Senior Land Services Officer Mitchell Plumbe with mesquite. Photo supplied by Western LLS



Fixed-wing drones will be used to locate mesquite in the Western Region. Photo supplied by Western LLS

Solar pumping field day for irrigators

Irrigators of broad acre and intensive horticulture are invited to a free field day on 24 May at Hillston. The day will showcase renewable technology for agriculture.

The focus will be on solar pumping, pump efficiency, and the latest energy-saving and storage technology.

Farmers will visit a 200-kilowatt solar array and pump system and will learn

about the whole process from initial design, installation and operation.

The gala day will showcase solar pump technology, monitoring systems, solar batteries, business cases for solar and storage, and finance options.

Suppliers will have information and technology on display on the day, and you'll be able to access one-on-one specialist technical support for pump

and energy efficiency and solar and storage (subsidised by the Office of Environment and Heritage).

The day will be hosted by LLS and the Office of Environment and Heritage.

Places are limited, so register your interest now.

Email anna.wilson@lls.nsw.gov.au or phone Anna on 0428 964 785.



Solar array of panels used for irrigation pumps at Hillston. Photo by Anna Wilson

Peppin-Shaw tour to SA stud Merino field days

By Sally Ware
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Asking landholders to leave their properties for 3 days after a long dry summer was always going to be a challenge, but in the end 13 stepped up and onto the bus and the second Peppin-Shaw Ewe Flock Forum regional bus tour was under way, the destination being the South Australian Stud Merino Field Days.

Organised by the Peppin-Shaw Committee, the bus tour was run this year as a replacement activity for the Forum, which is held only every second year. The first bus tour was held in 2014 and took us to the Hamilton district Prime Lamb Group field days.

With the trip well sponsored by Mark Bazeley's wool-selling business Riverina Wool and by Riverina LLS, the cost to

the tour participants was kept to an absolute minimum. Wagga Wagga Elders Livestock Producer Manager Rob Inglis joined the first leg of the tour. Participant and co-organizer of the tour was LLS Officer from Hay, Sally Ware.

We left Hay on Sunday morning, 20 March, with pickups along the way. An early highlight of the tour was lunch courtesy of Graham and Will Morphett at their home at Gol Gol, with a view of the Murray River.

Next stop was a drinks break at the historic Overland Corner Hotel at Riverland. Arriving in Burra on dusk, the group settled into their accommodation at the Paxton mining cottages before dining at the Black Sheep Italian restaurant. After a BBQ breakfast kindly supplied by the Burra Men's Shed, participants boarded the bus with local guide and ex-agent Andrew Butler. With Andrew providing directions and non-stop commentary, the bus headed west for a day of property visits, including to 'Moorundie Park', 'North Ashrose', 'East Bungaree',

'Collinsville', 'Old Ashrose', 'Greenfields', 'Gum Hill' and 'Springvale North'. The day finished at the Burra sports oval with Australian Wool Innovation hosting dinner and drinks.

After another Men's Shed BBQ breakfast, day 2 was spent back at the Burra oval at the Elders South Australia Stud Merino Expo. On day 3 we were homeward bound via a ferry crossing at Morgan and Banrock Station winery for a late breakfast.

For further details of the trip and photos, visit the Peppin-Shaw website and Facebook page or contact Sally Ware on 0429 307 627.



Participants in the 2016 Peppin-Shaw Ewe Flock Forum regional bus tour. L-R: Graham Morphett ('Yamba'), Russell Nield ('Benilikie'), Will Morphett ('Yamba'), Paul Dye ('Tchelery'), Steve Huggins ('Eurolie'), Ian Lugsdin ('Warrendale'), Roly Desailly ('Wyvern'), Scott Dixon ('Wyvern'), Dan Dowling ('Merritop'), Sally Ware (Riverina LLS), Ken Weckert ('Glynburn', 'Temora'), David Rankin ('Tupra'), Bert Matthews ('Bedarbidgal'), Rob Inglis (Elders) and Bob McKeon ('Kitcho'). Photo supplied by Sally Ware

Rangelands Paddock Walk at Booororban, south of Hay

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Following the success of a Paddock Walk held at Hay in early October last year after a productive wet winter, a second Walk was organized for the end of March at Booororban, about 30 kilometres south of Hay. This time the landscape showed the effects of a long, hot and dry summer, with a 4-month gap since the last effective rain.

As with the first Walk, local Australian Network for Plant Conservation ecologist and Conargo property owner Martin Driver was the principal speaker. The day started with the 15 participants meeting at the Royal Mail Hotel at Booororban. Here, refreshments were provided and a native plant and rangelands plant identification resource display discussed before we travelled

out to a local property, 'Thalaka', which had been recently purchased by the Simpson family.

The first viewing point at 'Thalaka' was a dominant stand of bladder saltbush (*Atriplex vesicaria*). Discussions here were focused on a boundary fenceline that showed a multi-decadal vegetation change, forced by grazing-pressure, from bladder saltbush to Dillon bush (*Nitraria billardierei*). Next stop was to view a sandhill vegetation community that included yarran (*Acacia melvillei*), silver and hooked needlewoods (*Hakea leucoptera* and *Hakea tephrosperma*), butterbush (*Pittosporum angustifolium*), emubush (*Eremophila longifolia*), narrow leaf hopbush (*Dodonaea viscosa* subsp. *angustissima*), ruby saltbush (*Enchylaena tomentosa*), punty bush (*Senna artemisioides* subsp. *coriacea*), thorny saltbush (*Rhagodia spinescens*) and western boobialla (*Myoporum montanum*).

From here we moved to a rosewood community (*Alectryon oleifolius*)

situated on the edge of a swamp containing nitre goosefoot (*Chenopodium nitrariaceum*) and lignum (*Muehlenbeckia florulenta*), as well as an unexpected flax-lily or *Dianella* sp. On the northern side of the swamp, on a small rise, were some quondong (*Santalum acuminatum*) trees that had at one stage had been protected from grazing with netting guards to allow them to reach maturity and set fruit.

Returning to the homestead for a lunch break and discussion, the group also viewed a miljee (*Acacia oswaldii*) tree and some cooba (*Acacia salicina*) trees or native willows around the garden yard.

Following the success of the last two Paddock Walks, a third one has been requested and will take place with Martin Driver in the Booororban area following a significant rainfall event—hopefully before June 30 this year. If you're interested, contact Sally Ware by email at sally.ware@lls.nsw.gov.au or by mobile on 0429 307 627.



Inspecting a quondong tree on the edge of a nitre goosefoot swamp during a recent rangelands Paddock Walk near Hay. Photo by Annabel Lugsdin

Cobar land managers host National Advocate for Soil Health

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On 19 February former Governor-General Major-General Michael Jeffery addressed landholders, mine representatives and community members at a luncheon showcasing the Western Division Resilient Landscapes Project in Cobar.

Soils for Life is delivering the project in partnership with the Rotary Club of Sydney and Western LLS. The project aims to help farmers better manage their properties to minimise the impact of drought and climate variability on production and landscape health. This will be done by identifying, documenting and facilitating the adoption of leading practices in regenerative landscape management in western NSW.

Project sponsors and participants were given the opportunity to join Major-General Jeffery, who is the Soils for Life founding Chairman and the National Advocate for Soil Health, to visit local property 'Glenace' before moving into Cobar for the luncheon and formal proceedings. The property visit gave General Jeffery the chance to speak with owners and with previous mentor program participants.

On 'Glenace', John and Ann Crossing, with support from LLS, have used interventions such as water spreading and authorised clearing of woody weed species. Along with rotational grazing and the management of total grazing pressure, these steps have helped restore what was previously a heavily degraded landscape.

The Rotary Club of Sydney, which is a major sponsor of the project, hosted the luncheon to recognise the

project's managers and participants and their achievements. Attendees learned of the many community projects that Rotary, a world-wide organisation, supports. This was further demonstrated by an additional donation from Rotary to the Western Division Resilient Landscapes Project.

Major-General Jeffery and a number of program participants gave short presentations about their involvement in the project and how they feel the project is helping them to achieve improved land management.

Major-General Jeffery spoke of his passion for healthy soils and the importance of looking after the landscape for human health, food security and global stability. A participant in an earlier stage of the

program spoke of the steep learning curve she had faced when taking on her father's Cobar properties. But she had found that her mentor—plus access to a network of like-minded people within the program—had provided her with the support and guidance she needed to develop a viable and sustainable farming business.

Project mentor Angus Whyte discussed the importance of applying resilience-building and regenerative land management practices and how it has been a turning point for his business. Perhaps the true value was put into perspective when Angus said, 'By focusing on soil health and improving our vegetation we have doubled our carrying capacity. That's equivalent to buying another million dollars' worth of land'.



Ann and John Crossing of 'Glenace', Gillean and Geoff Wilbow (Rotary Club of Sydney), Major-General Michael Jeffery, and Michael and Gunilla Austin (Rotary Sydney Cove). Photo by Emma Gomy



Accompanied by members of various Rotary Clubs, Major-General Jeffery accepts a cheque from Michael Austin, former president of the Rotary Club of Sydney Cove. Funds were raised by the Rotary Clubs of Sydney and Sydney Cove. Photo by Emma Gomy

Malleefowl in the Riverina



A fox inspecting an active mound. This type of photo is very commonly taken on many of the monitoring cameras. Photo supplied by David Kellett



David Kellett of Riverina LLS uploading data collected from one of the monitoring cameras set up to capture activity on an active mound. Photo supplied by David Kellett



A male malleefowl tends to the mound; it is believed that the male will move about 1 tonne of dirt each day through the breeding season to maintain the correct temperature for the incubation process. Photo supplied by David Kellett

Recently, David Kellett from Riverina LLS played host to two National Malleefowl Recovery Team (NMRT) members and an Ecologist from Donato Environmental Services (DES).

Malleefowl conservation researcher Dr Joe Benshemesh, National Coordinator of the recovery program Tim Burnard and Ecologist Danielle Madden-Hallett spent a full day meeting farmers and a team working with Riverina LLS to develop a malleefowl management plan for the region. The group visited a few malleefowl mounds, two of which were active, in the Yalgogrin area.

Tim, Joe and Danielle were greatly encouraged by the high level of enthusiasm from local landholders. Joe noted that 'One Yalgogrin farmer said that they had previously been told that malleefowl in the area were doomed'.

But Joe and Danielle both disagreed and emphasised that there was no reason the malleefowl could not survive in the area: 'It's all about managing whatever is lacking for the birds; we have seen many times across the nation

that malleefowl can persist in small reserves with appropriate management'.

On hearing this, the local promptly replied, 'I would have done much more if I'd known it was worthwhile!' This farmer seemed ready to back up that statement with increased effort to protect malleefowl habitat on his land in the future, and other locals appeared similarly determined.

Local malleefowl-related issues include working out whether broom and eucalypt harvesting, competition from grazing, and populations of feral species such as foxes are having significant impacts. The RLLS team will be producing a new management plan for malleefowl in the West Wyalong region. It will include annual monitoring of local mounds. Understanding how many birds are left in the area, and what the population trends are, is the starting point for effective management.

David Kellett is keen to hear from people who have sighted a malleefowl, have malleefowl on their properties, or just want to learn more about this amazing bird. Phone David on (02) 6970 1201.

Tim Burnard from the National Malleefowl Recovery Team (NMRT) will be in West Wyalong on Tuesday 16 August to conduct Malleefowl Mound Monitor Training using smart phones.

The smart phones have a specially designed app used by the NMRT for recording information gathered at each mound. The recorded data end up on the National Malleefowl Monitoring Database.

Please feel free to forward information on the training to anyone you know who might be interested. Check the date and let me know if you are interested in attending (contact details below).

For more information or to register your interest, contact David Kellett, (Acting) Senior Land Services Officer (Program Development), Riverina LLS on 02 6970 1201 or (mobile) 0428 693 990.

Managing shrub regrowth when the rains come

By Bruce Alchin
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The current run of erratic storm rains may not break the widespread drought, but it may give us a chance to effectively control shrub regrowth, particularly in the western areas of NSW and Queensland. Even patchy storms can drop significant amounts of rain across portions of paddocks and properties, and this may be enough to stimulate the growth of problem shrub species. When the drought-breaking rains do come, large areas of dormant shrubs may spring into life.

Low-growing populations of prickly acacia are evident on the Mitchell Grass Downs country from well north of Longreach to the limits of this plant's southern distribution. Like any small shrubs they can have a well-developed root system, but the drought means that they have only just survived and will be depending on the stored plant food in their roots. When effective rains arrive, the shrubs will revive and new leaf growth will appear, but for a short period the shrubs' growth will still depend on their stored plant food. Once there is enough new leaf area,

photosynthesis will provide the main supply of plant food for growth, and this will continue until the plant moves into a later dormant phase.

Graziers are encouraged to take the opportunity to implement control of existing shrubs at the stage when they first start regrowing and before they become more established (i.e. before photosynthesis starts supporting the plants). This is the stage when they are at their most vulnerable. To maximise the effectiveness of any treatment, take advantage of these short weak-link phases in the shrub's life cycle.

The advantage of treating shrubs at the early regrowth stage applies to both native invasive shrubs and introduced species. For native invasive shrubs, the goal is to regain and maintain the optimum balance of trees–shrubs–grass for each land type.

Although fire is one of the most effective tools for managing shrubs, the chance to burn won't be available until there is sufficient fuel available. However, other methods—mechanical, chemical and grazing/browsing—can be used to manage and control shrubs. Integrating these methods can be the best approach: it allows maximisation of the advantages and minimisation of the weaknesses for each method.

Where edible shrubs (e.g. mesquite, mimosa) are carrying seeds, the type

of browsing livestock can make a difference to the amount of viable seed for new shrubs. In the case of prickly acacia, sheep destroy about 80% of the viable seeds that pass through their gut. With cattle, it's about 20%.

Graziers should check on the latest government regulations on tree and shrub management before they start treatment. Talk to your rural supply agent about what chemicals to use and how to apply them. Be careful when using broad-spectrum chemicals, as they can affect non-target species.

It's sometimes hard to get extensions on finance for shrub control, particularly when the plant population is relatively low. In this scenario, removing shrubs may not immediately increase profit. Graziers may need to explain to the bank that eliminating or reducing a population of shrubs will have the following benefits in the mid- to long term:

- reduced input to the future shrub seed bank
- reduced competitive effect of existing shrubs on grass
- reduced bare areas around shrubs (these areas are a focus for potential further spread)
- increased future profit by reducing future shrub-control costs and increasing livestock productivity through higher grass production.

Shrub encroachment in north-west NSW



1. Seedlings and young plants are a potential problem; 2. This area was burnt in 1984 from a wildfire and may have been re-burnt in 1990; 3. Maturing shrubs 3 years after fire; 4. Shrubs were well established by 2006; only an exceptional season would produce enough fuel for a management burn.

All photos by Peter Droulers, former Western CMA

Western Lands Advisory Council communiqué

By Geoff Wise
Chair
Western Lands Advisory Council

The Western Lands Advisory Council (WLAC; the Council) greatly appreciates the ongoing support from financial contributors to allow the popular Western Newsletter to be produced. Since the last Communiqué from the WLAC was published, our Council has held three meetings—in June and November 2015 and in March 2016.

The following highlights some of the more significant issues addressed during these meetings.

Membership changes to the WLAC

The following new appointments have been made following the retirement of previous members:

- Paul Dale, replacing Cameron Ricketts representing the Minister for Resources and Energy (mining)
- Ken Harrison, replacing Greg Markwick representing the Minister for Primary Industries.

The Minister for Primary Industries has also recently implemented a new initiative by appointing Mr Douglass McKay to the new position of Alternate Independent Chair.

Congratulations were extended to Andrew Bell on his appointment to the position of Director – Regional Operations West (which covers about 90% of NSW) and Western Lands Commissioner and to Sharon Hawke on her appointment to the position of Area Manager – Far West and Assistant Western Lands Commissioner. Our Council appreciates the huge value of having senior people in these positions who have not only years of experience in Western Division issues but also a genuine passion for the region.

Crown lands administration

The WLAC has received regular updates on the Crown Lands Review and at various times has been given opportunities to provide feedback responses.

We have also been kept abreast of ongoing changes to land administration responsibilities at the Ministerial, Departmental titles and senior Departmental staff levels.

Council has been regularly briefed on projects being undertaken within the Crown Lands Section, including:

- Land Capability Assessment of the different lands across the Western Division. This work could play a significant role in any future government consideration of freeholding of parts of the Western Division.
- progress with the Legal Roads Network, which is a project to methodically ensure that all public roads in the Western Division are appropriately gazetted, that every property has a formal road access, and that any other roads not considered as being needed as public roads are formally 'extinguished' as public thoroughfares. Over recent years, this work has been completed throughout the Unincorporated Area and the Shires of Broken Hill, Bourke, Central Darling and Cobar. Work in Wentworth Shire is nearly complete, and work has started in Walgett Shire.
- resealing of the Tibooburra Aerodrome bitumen runway. This has been completed at significant cost. Other works on the Aerodrome over the last few years have been successfully undertaken, including completion of boundary fencing with 1.8-metre kangaroo-proof netting, new solar lighting along the bitumen strip, and regrading and reforming of the gravel runway.
- ongoing review of the NSW Travelling Stock Reserve (TSR) resource, including the NSW Draft TSR State Planning Framework 2016–2019.
- Wild Dog Destruction Board (WDDDB) updates
- A Voluntary Surrender Scheme for Western Lands Leases affected by opal mining at Lightning Ridge and surrounding opal fields. The existing land-use conflict between landholders and miners has created a very emotional and complex issue. The Division of Resources and Energy is the lead agency for the scheme, with DPI – Lands helping in respect to land tenure.

Travelling Stock Reserves

The Council made a submission on the NSW Draft TSR State Planning Framework 2016–2019, highlighting the unique situation in the Western Division whereby the majority of TSRs overlie Western Lands Leases (WLLs). The Council asked for consideration be given to determining and evaluating the benefits and risks of revoking all TSRs that overlie WLLs. It should be noted that the identified active and passive users of TSRs, as listed in the review framework, are effectively irrelevant by virtue of the WLL title.

The Advisory Council wrote a letter to Western LLS asking them to take the lead in determining and evaluating the benefits and risks of revoking all TSRs that overlie WLLs. Our Council also recognises the problematic situation with Public Watering Places.

Kangaroos

Kangaroo numbers and species, and the impacts of these native animals on total grazing pressure, station management and human safety, continue as a major theme.

Our Council was given a detailed address by Stephen Wolter, Manager of the NSW Kangaroo Management Program, in relation to the current program.

We understand that the numbers of kangaroos across the Western Division far exceeds the combined number of sheep and goats. Species distribution has significantly changed since European settlement, with eastern greys now being widely distributed and euros, which are not included in any official kangaroo counts, also far more widely distributed than historically.

Our Council focuses its considerations on the holistic sustainability of all natural resources, and it recognises that an essential component of ensuring sustainability of all biodiversity is to have sustainable management of all species that have an impact on total grazing pressure. Such pressure is exerted by native grazing wildlife (e.g. kangaroos and emus), domestic livestock, rangeland goats and pest species (e.g. pigs, rabbits and plague locusts).

Although all of these species have impacts on native vegetation, kangaroos (and emus) are the only species that are currently subject to ineffective policies constraining land managers from realistic control of excessive grazing pressure. The policies relating to kangaroos fundamentally rely on a false

assumption that commercial harvesting of kangaroos will be an adequate and effective population control mechanism.

Our Council believes there is a need for kangaroo management reform to provide land managers in the Western Division with more effective mechanisms than at present for sustainable management of total grazing pressure.

Historically, kangaroo numbers across western NSW have had a direct relationship with cumulative seasonal conditions, resulting in significant peaks and troughs. Each of a diverse range of different kangaroo management strategies using policy control programs has had only a proportionally smaller impact on kangaroo numbers than the seasonal influences. The greater causes of population decline during adverse seasons have consistently been starvation and disease. Any government strategy that depends on the starvation and disease of animals should be considered totally unacceptable.

Allowing wild dogs and dingoes to roam freely across the Western Division (as occurred before European settlement) and to thus maul kangaroos to death is equally an unacceptable strategy.

Our Council made a detailed submission to the NSW Biodiversity Act Review and is now considering an opportunity to convene a targeted workshop to further progress options for future policy considerations.

Pest management review

The Advisory Council received an overview of the State-Wide Review of Pest Animal Management Issues Paper released by the Natural Resources Commission. Our Council decided that individual constituent groups should make their own submissions to the review.

Far dams policy considerations west of the Paroo River

Difficulties have been highlighted with the application of the state-wide policy controlling dams constructed on streams of different 'orders' in that part of western NSW where watercourses are not connected to an ocean, either through the Darling–Murray River system or via coastal rivers.

The region involved is the driest part of NSW and includes some of the Lake Eyre Basin, where small 'watercourses' either peter out or end in terminal lakes.

This matter has been raised with the Minister and is now to be progressed with senior Departmental staff. An opportunity is being requested to review the state-wide 'one size fits all' policy to allow a more practical approach for this Far Western region.

Climatic considerations

Our Council received a detailed brief on the NSW Farmers Association Drought Policy and was given an opportunity to comment.

Our Council wrote to the Hon. Greg Hunt MP, Commonwealth Minister for the Environment, asking that the Bureau of Meteorology consider collating, converting, and then using existing long-term, non-electronic historic rainfall data from registered weather stations in Western NSW towns and properties (which are not currently included in drought mapping) so as to establish baseline data for more accurate long-term rainfall analysis.

The response was that weather recording data must be assessed to be of a consistent standard, and that anyone wishing to become an official weather recorder may apply. The Hon. Greg Hunt advised of the recent proposed establishment of 28 new rainfall-recording sites to be registered by the Bureau of Meteorology. Our Council is now seeking advice on the location of these stations in order that the Advisory Council can provide additional sites for the Bureau of Meteorology's consideration.

We also wrote to the Hon. Greg Hunt seeking consideration of capitalising on, and using, existing telemetry stations in Western NSW (such as cap-and-bore schemes and river gauging stations) as official weather reporting stations for the Bureau of Meteorology. A non-committal response was received.

Evaluation of WEST 2000 and WEST 2000 Plus programs

Our Council received a detailed briefing of the recent evaluation of the \$30 million WEST 2000 and WEST 2000 Plus programs run across the Western Division from 1997 to 2005. The foresight of the WEST 2000 Plus Management Board to set aside funds to allow a delayed long-term evaluation of the programs is unique for government programs.

The overall review highlighted many successful outcomes, with the most significant issue being that these two Rural Partnership Programs created catalysts for change for many people.

The Council appreciates the action taken by the Western LLS, at our request, in ensuring that this review and a similar one conducted in 2001 have been placed on the website for the Western LLS, ensuring the two reviews remain accessible for widespread access.

Proposed small goat abattoir at Bourke

Mr Scott Bell (General Manager, JPA Business Pty Ltd) provided the Advisory

Council with a presentation on the Small Stock Abattoir at Bourke proposed by CAPRA. In response, our Council noted the benefits for the goat industry, Total Grazing Pressure and employment, and is supporting the proposal through a letter to the Hon. Niall Blair MLC, Minister for Lands and Water.

Updates from Advisory Council members

All members of the Advisory Council provided updates in relation to their constituent bodies. Some of the key points presented included:

- The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) issued a Pest Control Order for camels on 31 January 2015. The Western LLS and DPI completed a successful aerial cull of 46 or 47 camels in April 2015. Follow-up culling was planned. This initiative was a direct response to requests made by the WLAC.
- Regular updates were made in relation to the Local Government Review, with particular reference to the Far West Initiative.
- Regular updates were made on the Western LLS's activities, which included:
 - ❖ an Organisational Review, with the area being split into three subregions, with an Area Commander for each subregion
 - ❖ their draft Strategic Plan 2016–21 and funding sources
 - ❖ overviews of projects, including pig and dog control and fencing projects.
- Through the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) Sheep and Goats Advisory Committee, the NSW Farmers' Association and the Goat Industry Council of Australia (GICA) have been very proactive in ensuring that the traceability of goats is continuously improving and meets the requirements to ensure that the 'Rangeland' exemption of animals sent direct to a depot or abattoir is maintained. This is considered extremely important to the Western Division, both financially and environmentally.
- An overview was conducted of fossicking in the Western Division, including proposed fossicking districts.
- Our Council is in the process of preparing a submission to the current review of funding arrangements for the 'Cap and Pipe the Bores' Scheme within the Great Artesian Basin. Individual submissions can also be made.



Local Land
Services
Riverina



Australian Wool
Innovation Limited



Department of
Primary Industries

'Livestock Production in the Rangelands'

Thursday 12 May, 2016

8.30 am - 2.00 pm

Shear Outback Shearing Shed, Hay

PROGRAM AND SPEAKERS

- | | | | |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8.30 am | Registration, tea and coffee | 11.00 am | MORNING TEA |
| 9.00 am | Welcome | 11.20 am | Managing for climate variation impacts and adaptation: the practical steps
Greg Curran, private veterinarian, Broken Hill |
| 9.10 am | Producing rams in the rangelands
Stephen and Carol Huggins, Woodpark Poll Merino Stud, Hay | 11.50 am | Rangeland goat meat industry – it has gone boom – why?
Rick Gates, local producer and owner of Gates Goats and President of the Goat Industry Council of Australia |
| 9.40 am | Wether production – sell as stores or value add?
Geoff Duddy, Sheep Solutions, Yanco. Plus an overview of the RamSelect workshop and Lifetime Ewe Management course and an opportunity to view Woodpark Poll rams in preparation for a RamSelect workshop to be held following day | 12.20 pm | Australian Wool Innovation speaker |
| 10.30 am | Benefits of selecting rams on genetic merit
Murray Long, Clear View Consulting, Wagga Wagga | 12.50 pm | Summing up and question time |
| | | 1 – 2 pm | LUNCH |

*BBQ lunch provided by NSW DPI Rural Resilience Program
During lunch there will be an opportunity to interact with the speakers and visiting final year students from the University of Sydney and Charles Sturt University.*

RSVP – Friday 9 May to assist with catering

Sally Ware, Riverina Local Land Services Hay: sally.ware@lls.nsw.gov.au mob: 0429 307 627



National
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