

MURRAY LOCAL COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP (LCAG)

A committee of the Murray Local Land Services Board.

Report to the Murray LLS Board for the period May – August 2016

LCAG members

Tony Piggin (Chairperson, Corowa)

Malcolm Holm (Finley)
Eric Lavis (Bungowannah)
Phil Snowden (Tocumwal)
Dale Stringer (Holbrook)
Helen Collins (Barham)
Felicity Middleton (Mannus) apology
Tony a'Beckett (Glenroy/Tumbarumba) apology
Colin Bull (Deniliquin) apology
Neil Bull (Deniliquin) apology
John Bruce (Barooga) apology
Allan Curtis (Albury) apology
Rick Ellis (Barham) apology
Rob Fenton (Albury) apology
Terry Hogan (Jerilderie) apology

MEETING 7 – 17th August 2016

The Murray LCAG held its seventh meeting on the 17th August 2016 in Barooga NSW.

In addition to members listed above the following people were in attendance at the meeting:

MLLS Staff: Chris Cumming, Andrew Cooper, David Clarke and Maureen Zeschke.

Regional Landcare Facilitator: Edwina Hayes

LCAG Administration

A couple of members have offered their resignation to Tony Piggin. Tony a Beckett (upper Murray) has cited recent council amalgamation and time commitments required to focus upper Murray issues. John Bruce (Riverine Plains) has believes he is too time constrained to give MLCAG the time and effort it deserves and requires of its members. Board may seek members to address gaps if they are identified.

Community Grants

Murray LLS sought input from Murray LCAG with regards to the planning of the 2016/17 Community Grants program, sought feedback on the Community Grant guidelines and assessment criteria and sought an LCAG member to participate in the assessment process.

Murray LCAG noted that the criteria for Community and Aboriginal Community grants does not require updating from last year and is still fit for purpose. Alternative methods of providing funding through open call grants processes were suggested, including a riparian management incentives program for the Upper Murray project and the formation of agricultural discussion groups.

LCAG made a number of recommendations with regards to the 2016/17 Community Grants round:

- Murray LLS needs to be clear with the timelines and duration of projects.
- Murray LLS should adopt a “regional grants round” rather than a “landholder incentives” program.
- An incentives program managed through an open call grants round would exclude the broader

region from participation.

- Murray LLS should offer groups more than 4 weeks to submit applications to allow groups to meet and/or plan for project applications.
- Murray LLS should directly approach groups where there is a gap or need for a focus group to exist and leave Community Grants for established groups in the region.

LCAG Members Reports

The members report offers LCAG members a chance to raise key concerns, common issues and emerging trends in the region so that they might be addressed at LCAG meetings. There were a number of issues that were raised to be talked to at the meeting.

Native vegetation clearing – Helen and Rick from Western Murray Land Improvement Group raised a question regarding the new Native vegetation clearing self-assessment and the required community response to suspected clearing activities. Maureen Zeschke, Sr Land Services Officer with Murray LLS presented an update of the Biodiversity Reforms and options for community members who feel that illegal clearing may be taking place.

How do I report illegal clearing? By phone: 131 555, by email: info@environment.nsw.gov.au. Any information you provide will remain confidential. If you wish to remain anonymous, you will not have the opportunity to follow the action taken. Further information at <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/questions/illegal-land-clearing>

TSR Management – Rick Ellis from Western Murray Land Improvement Group raised the concern of perceived lack of management of significant vegetation areas on local Travelling Stock Reserves (TSR's). David Clarke, Team Leader of Land Management Team with Murray LLS answered questions with regards to how TSR's are managed locally and the limitations and implications of managing TSR's in the region.

Erosion – Dale Stringer from Holbrook Landcare raised the concern of increased risk of erosion this season due to amount of water in the landscape, reduced funding for erosion control in the region and reduced government expertise. Dale asked that Murray LLS consider this as a gap in the region at present and a risk to the organisation.

Funding after June 2017 – Dale Stringer from Holbrook Landcare raised concerns the uncertainty of federal and state funding for NRM and sustainable agriculture in the region post June 2017. Dale recommends that Murray LLS pursues funding to provide certainty to groups in the region and asks that groups be informed as soon as future funding is known. Chris Cumming, Manager Strategic Land Services with Murray LLS, said that groups will be supported in line with current support until the end of National Landcare Programme funding in June 2018. Murray LCAG and groups would be informed of future funding opportunities as they arose.

HIGHLIGHTS

- RGA AGM at Deniliquin, "Looking forward – Looking back"
- Regeneration response on EVORIL small plot trial sites due to favourable rainfall. Five project Technical Notes have been published (see tabled copies).
- Good turnout at RGA legume trial field day and Moulamein Cropping Group Soil structure improvement project.
- Moulamein Cropping group have purchased moisture monitors for trial work.
- Green Army Commences at Holbrook/Culcairn

UPCOMING EVENTS

- WMLIG Evening at Wakool, Topic from 'Making more from Sheep', with speakers, 19th September.

- WMLIG Promotional Calendar to highlight key takeaway messages from events, and diversity of group activities in the region.
- Central Murray BestWool BestLamb MMFS night planned for Wakool 19th September.
- BushLinks final round projects and commencement
- Nutrient Management workshops
- Feed Testing program
- Pasture renovations discussion groups
- Discussion group (various ag related topics)
- GRDC Subsoil acidity trails
- MLA/AWI Influencing Lamb Sex Ratios farm trials
- RLF and LLCI activities. LLCI beginning to generate momentum and activity in formerly dormant landcare groups.

LLS Consultative Models

LLS Consultative Models –

MLLS is continuing to explore its consultative models in the region. As part of that there is a review of the LCAG terms of Reference.

This session focussed on seeking feedback from the LCAG on current consultation processes and possible improvements.

LCAG workshopped the consultation and collaboration needs of MLLS, groups and farmers and then discussed whether existing models services those needs

LLS

- ID of local needs
- Input to planning
- Collaboration and partnership development
- Coordination of eservices and activities of various stakeholders
- Identification of service gaps
- Provision of advice

Groups

- Information, influence and access to funding and resource allocation
- Collaboration/partnerships for delivery/leverage/access to opportunities
- Access to skills/experience/advice
- Integrated planning/influencing LLS business
- Coordinated communications
- Issue/information resolution and feedback
- Shared learnings eg how do you measure practice change
- Issue gap analysis eg business management systems
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Farmers

- Local issues
- Individual issues
- Legislation policy changes requiring input from farmers
- Addressing local needs
- Access to expertise and response to issues
- Support in crises
- Access to independent holistic advice
- Business systems

Existing Consultation mechanisms

- Project committees
- Program/ theme committees (eg MATG,)
- Issues committees – wild dogs/weeds
- Area Committees – eg Upper Murray, billabong Yanco
- Area consultation – with local groups
- LCAG
- 1:1 farmers/groups/events

Areas for improvement – opportunities

- Stronger links between private and public stakeholders
- Engagement with private agronomists and farm advisors
- Communicating the partnerships/s
- Local/area planning days
- Functional areas
 - Function by function could assess need for more in depth mechanisms
 - Could strengthen LCAG portfolio model
 - Can bring functional experts into key planning days

Overall comments

- MLLS doing it well compared to other regions
- Doing it well – very comprehensive
- Use group structure as the link to farmers
- LLS direct consultation with farmers would be at times of crises/legislative reform etc
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Regional Landcare Facilitator Program plan

- Edwina Hayes provided the Program plan for the 2016/17 RLF program. The LCAG members did not have general discussion regarding the plan.
- RLF provided an update on plans for Henty and promoting Landcare and producer groups in the region. It was noted that existing postcard products for promotion of Murray Landcare missed the opportunity to acknowledge NLP funding, NSW landcare funding or LLS /landcare model

Community Grants 2016: Recommendations

- Murray LLS needs to be clear with the timelines and duration of projects.
- Murray LLS should adopt a “regional grants round” rather than a “landholder incentives” program.
- An incentives program managed through an open call grants round would exclude the broader region from participation.
- Murray LLS should offer groups more than 4 weeks to submit applications to allow groups to meet and/or plan for project applications.
- Murray LLS should directly approach groups where there is a gap or need for a focus group to exist and leave Community Grants for established groups in the region.

Recommendation: MLLS to consider all opportunities to provide groups with certainty of funding post June 2017.

Consultation Models: Recommendations

- Murray LLS continue to use localism/the community group structure as the link to farmers.
- The only time LLS should have direct consultation with farms would be in times of crises and/or legislative reforms.

NSW Landcare Conference: Advice to Board

- The MLLS and Landcare groups required to allocate resources to service the functions will need to determine whether they are prepared to support a regional bid.
- Good opportunity to promote the investment of the AG and state government in Landcare.
- Good opportunity to promote the collaborative LLS/Landcare model.
- Opportunity to showcase the region and the challenges facing the region.
- LCAG are supportive of bid as long as host organisations and Murray LLS are prepared to support it.