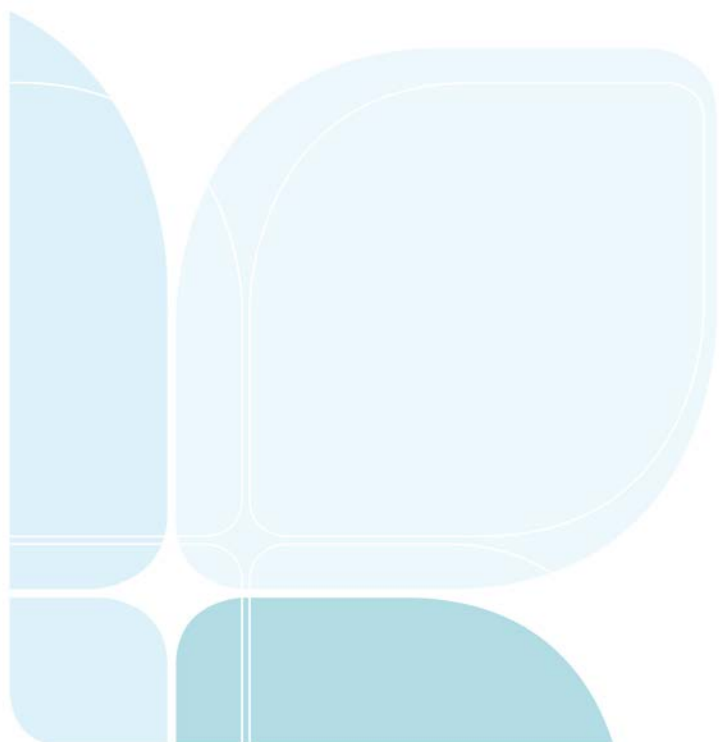




Local Land
Services
Hunter

ANNUAL REPORT

1 January 2014 – 31 December 2014



Published by the Local Land Services

First published April 2015

ISBN 978-1-74256-759-4

Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of the report January 2014 to December 2014. 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.

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Chairperson Foreword

For Hunter Local Land Services, 2014 was a year spent establishing ourselves in the local community.

Our job is to protect and support our primary industries, ensure the health of our natural resources, and help communities prepare and respond to emergencies, such as flood and fire.

This report reflects the wide range of services and activities we undertook to fulfil those responsibilities.

Our board and staff have been working with farmers, landholders and communities to deliver relevant services in agricultural advice, natural resource management, animal health and biosecurity, and emergency management.

We hit the ground running, delivering services for a healthy and productive Hunter region and providing advice on agriculture, animal and plant health, pests and disease.

We are also establishing important partnerships with individual landholders, industry groups and the local community to build a strong platform for providing services in the future.

A vital part of this approach has been having local people involved in our work at the grass-roots level and the establishment of four community advisory groups has provided a strong foundation.

This gives our services and advice even greater strength and means we can achieve better on-ground results.

I am delighted with the achievements of our board and staff in 2014, and I look forward to continue our work with the community and building on these achievements in 2015.



About Local Land Services

Local Land Services (LLS) brings together agricultural production advice, biosecurity, natural resource management and emergency management into a single organisation. Eleven LLS regions, managed by 11 local boards cover NSW: Central Tablelands, Central West, Greater Sydney, Hunter, Murray, North Coast, Northern Tablelands, North West, Riverina, South East and Western regions.

Each region is accountable for delivering services that add value to local industries, enhance natural resources, protect industries from pests and disease and help communities respond to emergencies like flood, fire and drought.

Local boards headed by local chairs work closely with farmers, landholders and communities. Each region will develop operational management plans that will prioritise service delivery on a regional basis, reflecting regional priorities.

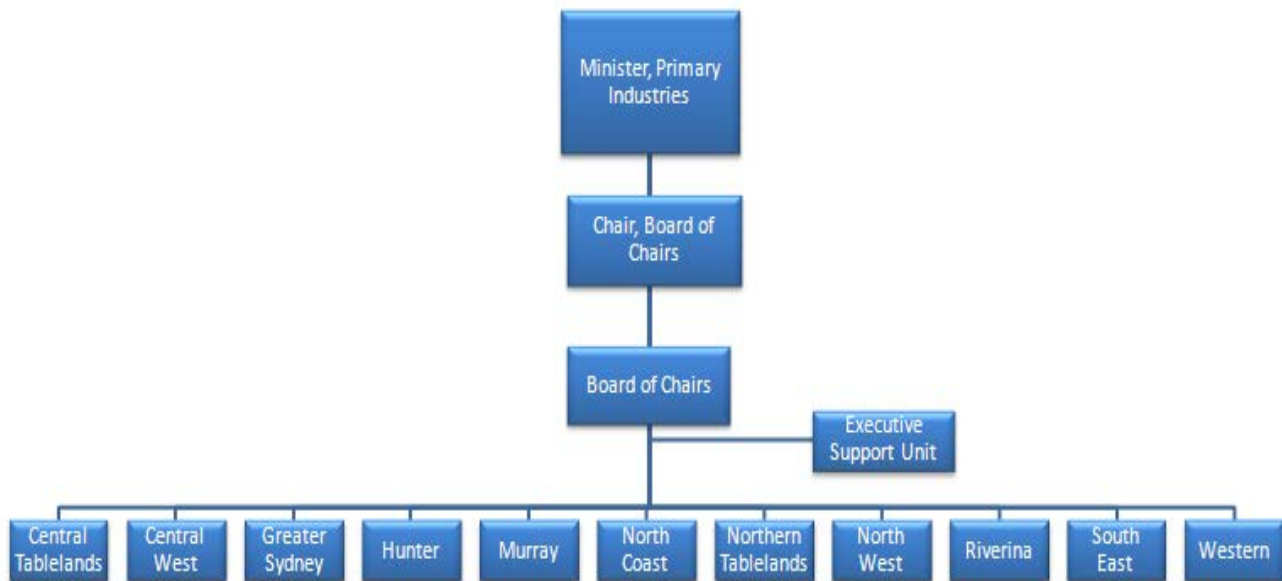
All the local Chairs together form the Local Land Services Board of Chairs. The Board of Chairs is led by the Chair of the Board of Chairs, John Macarthur-Stanham.

Local Land Services boards are accountable for:

- administering and delivering local land services
- developing and implementing appropriate governance arrangements for the delivery of local land services
- preparing a state strategic plan and local strategic plans
- providing and facilitating education and training in connection with agricultural production, biosecurity, natural resource management and emergency management
- making recommendations regarding rates, levies and contributions on rateable and other land
- providing and administering grants, loans, subsidies or other financial assistance for local land services
- communicating, consulting and engaging with the community, including the Aboriginal community, to encourage participation in the delivery of local land services.

The regions and the Board of Chairs are supported by a small Executive Support Unit (ESU) located primarily at Dubbo. The Executive Support Unit seeks to provide Local Land Services with operational leverage and administrative and policy consistency, while respecting regional decision making and accountability.

Organisational Chart



Our Region

The Hunter Local Land Services region covers an area of approximately 33,000 square kilometres east of the Great Dividing Range, from the dramatic sandstone escarpments and gorges of the Goulburn River, to the rich alluvial floodplains of the Hunter, Paterson, Barrington, Wollombi Brook, Williams and Manning Rivers. Along the coast the region extends north from Lake Macquarie to Taree and three nautical miles out to sea.

Natural resources

The Hunter region has good soils, a subtropical climate and abundant rainfall. The diverse natural resources and vegetation ranges from estuarine wetlands and mangroves, rainforests and freshwater wetlands to open grasslands, woodlands, eucalypt forests, lakes and foreshores.

The region's major waterways are the Manning, Karuah, Wallamba, Myall, Hunter, Williams, Goulburn and Pages rivers and Wallis Lakes, Myall Lakes, Port Stephens, Lake Macquarie and Lake Munmorah.

The region is home to the Barrington Tops World Heritage Area, and Wollemi, Yengo, Goulburn River, Hunter Wetlands, Wallarah, Myall Lakes and Crowdy Bay National Parks.

The Hunter Estuary and Myall Lakes systems are Ramsar listed as nationally and internationally significant wetland sites for migratory and resident shorebirds, while Port Stephens Great Lakes Marine Park has significant soft coral and sponge gardens which provide important habitat for many marine species.

Industries

Grazing of beef cattle and sheep are major agricultural activities in the Hunter, as are dairying, poultry production, dryland cropping, irrigated cropping, fodder production and turf production on alluvial soils. The region is also renowned for its thoroughbred horse industry and vineyards.

The natural resources of the region support a wide range of industries, including farming, forestry, fishing, oyster farming, tourism and nature-based recreation. Residential and commercial development dominates the coastal fringe.

Cultural heritage

Our region has a rich cultural heritage and its landscapes and natural resources traditionally sustained a significant Aboriginal population. There are many important cultural sites and landscapes throughout the catchment that are of state, national and international significance, and these continue to be managed by local communities.

The Hunter Valley is the oldest wine growing region in the country. It was also the birthplace of coal mining in Australia, with the first coal shipment - and the nation's first commodity export – leaving from Newcastle in the 1790s. Agriculture first commenced in the Hunter in the early 1800s and continues to be a vital part of the culture of the region.

People

There are around 670,000 people currently living in the Hunter Local Land Services region.

More than 17,000 Hunter Local Land Services ratepayers (with properties over 10 hectares) directly invest in the biosecurity, animal welfare and emergency services functions of Hunter Local Land Services.

Additionally all property owners in the Hunter Valley pay a local levy called the Hunter Catchment Contribution, collected through local council rates. These funds are invested into the region to help support infrastructure work and maintenance of the Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme, as well as a range of other initiatives to help keep communities safe from floods and to improve land management in the Hunter.

The major population centres are in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie local government areas which, along with Maitland and Cessnock, have experienced significant increases in population in recent years, while the population of some rural areas has been in decline. Other major urban centres include Nelson Bay, Raymond Terrace, Dungog, Singleton, Muswellbrook, Scone, Gloucester, Forster-Tuncurry and Taree.

Although there are significant physical and climatic differences between east and west, issues identified within our communities are often similar. For example, the need to control weeds and pests, strengthen community cohesion, improve infrastructure and services, and sustainably manage soils and rivers are consistent across the region.

HUNTER



Principal Office

Principal Office Address	Principal Office Phone	Email & Website
816 Tocal Road Paterson NSW 2421	(02) 4930 1030	www.hunter.lls.nsw.gov.au admin.hunter@lls.nsw.gov.au

Senior Staff

	General Manager	Manager - Land Services	Manager - Land Services	Manager - Biosecurity & Emergency Management	Manager - Business & Finance
Name	Brett Miners	Cal Cotter	Glenn Lyons	Jane Edwards	Sarah Wallace
Location	Paterson	Paterson	Paterson	Paterson	Taree
Telephone	02 4930 1030				02 6551 8994

Governance

CHAIR MEMBER	BOARD MEMBER	BOARD MEMBER	BOARD MEMBER	BOARD MEMBER	BOARD MEMBER	BOARD MEMBER
Susan Hooke	Ted Laurie	James Clark	Daryl Dutton	Ron Campbell	Peter Bishop Jnr	Tony Hegarty
0408 523 565	6558 5503	0427 545 212	0408 410 641	0428 485 153	0429 454 189	0427 761 052

Board Attendees

LLS	Name of board member	7 Meetings	Number of meetings attended
Hunter	Susan Hooke	Jan, Mar, May, Jul, Sept, Nov, Dec	7
	Ted Laurie	Jan, Mar, May, Jul, Sept, Nov	6
	James Clark	May, Jul, Nov, Dec	4
	Daryl Dutton	Jan, Mar, May, Jul, Sept, Nov, Dec	7
	Ron Campbell	Mar, May, Sept, Nov, Dec	5
	Peter Bishop Jnr	Mar, May, Jul, Sept, Dec	5
	Tony Hegarty	Mar, May, Jul, Sept, Nov	5

The board also conducted monthly workshops in February, April, June, August and October, which were attended by board members. These workshops focussed on developing policies and strategies to guide the organisation.

Operational overview by General Manager

In our first year of operation Hunter Local Land Services has provided advice and support to key local industries, helping to protect them from pests and disease and ensure the health of important natural resources.

This includes supporting and protecting our \$171 million beef cattle industry and \$125 million poultry meat industry and keeping the region free of pests and diseases found elsewhere, thereby maintaining crucial access to markets.

Our board and staff have been working to support Hunter farmers, producers and landholders to build strong professional relationships and deliver high quality, relevant services.



In 2014 our team has achieved significant results including:

- increased budgets available for our district veterinarians to undertake surveillance and testing to protect the region's agriculture and economy
- 1513 general vet and biosecurity consultations
- increased the budgets for the control of wild dog populations in the region
- increased landholder capacity to control invasive pest animals
- developed capacity-building programs for Aboriginal communities to plan and control pest animals
- delivered a major pig control program in the region
- assisted with the response to the Fire Ant emergency management in Sydney
- developed strategies and supported landholders in natural resource management projects across the region
- a coordinated regional approach to managing the highly invasive weed African Olive
- 925 hectares of native vegetation projects enhancing and linking priority biodiversity corridors
- sustainable grazing outcomes on more than 4,000ha of agricultural land
- increased investment in sustainable agriculture activities which boost farm viability and environmental sustainability
- 15 Landcare projects and two Regional Landcare Scholarships
- increased capital and maintenance expenditure on our network of Travelling Stock Reserves by \$90,000
- ongoing provision of seasonal condition reports to the NSW Government
- delivering regular seasonal condition workshops which offer advice and options to help inform farmers' responses to dry conditions
- established four community advisory groups.

Operational revenues are projected to decline over the next two years and we have adjusted our staffing strategy accordingly in order to balance high levels of service delivery with financial viability.

Our staff live and work in the Hunter, are familiar with the local farming and natural resources of the area, and are committed to protecting and nurturing them.

Local Community Advisory Groups

Local community advisory groups provide input into the development of plans, projects and services and are an integral link between Local Land Services and the community it serves.

Community advisory group members are suitably qualified to serve on the group and representative of the interests of the local community and stakeholders in the region.

Hunter LLS has four community advisory groups (CAGs):

- Lower Hunter Community Advisory Group
- Upper Hunter Community Advisory Group
- Manning Great Lakes Community Advisory Group
- Aboriginal Community Advisory Group.

The advisory groups work with members of the LLS board on key issues related to agriculture, plant and animal biosecurity, emergency management and natural resource management.

The groups are intended to provide high level advice to LLS on the full range of its services and functions. They form a key part of LLS' community engagement framework and will guide the strategic direction of Hunter LLS.

Each group consists of representatives across primary industry groups, government and other interest groups from across the Hunter.

A range of processes have been used to establish the groups, including public calls for expressions of interest and direct appointment by key regional and local organisations.

Further information about our community advisory groups is available on the Hunter Local Land Services website.

Lower Hunter Community Advisory Group

Purpose/focus: Provide high level advice to LLS on the full range of its services and functions. The group forms a key part of LLS' community engagement framework and will guide the strategic direction of Hunter LLS.

Selection process: Members appointed to represent primary industry groups, government, and other interest groups from across the Lower Hunter including Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens, Cessnock, Maitland and Dungog.

Membership/group details: Single overarching advisory group representing the Lower Hunter. Group guided by TORs and an advisory group Chair. The group consists of 30 members.

Meeting details: Biannual advisory group meetings.

Upper Hunter Community Advisory Group

Purpose/focus: Provide high level advice to LLS on the full range of its services and functions. The group forms a key part of LLS' community engagement framework and will guide the strategic direction of Hunter LLS.

Selection process: Members appointed to represent primary industry groups, government, and other interest groups from across the Upper Hunter, Singleton and Muswellbrook.

Membership/group details: Single overarching advisory group representing the Upper Hunter. Group guided by TORs and an advisory group Chair. The group consists of 35 members.

Meeting details: Biannual advisory group meetings.

Manning Great Lakes Community Advisory Group

Purpose/focus: Provide high level advice to LLS on the full range of its services and functions. The group forms a key part of LLS' community engagement framework and will guide the strategic direction of Hunter LLS.

Selection process: Members appointed to represent primary industry groups, government, and other interest groups from across the Manning Great Lakes region, including Great Lakes, Greater Taree and Gloucester.

Membership/group details: Single overarching advisory group representing the Manning Great Lakes region. Group guided by TORs and an advisory group Chair. The group consists of 22 members.

Meeting details: Biannual advisory group meetings.

Aboriginal Community Advisory Group

Purpose/focus: Provide high level advice to LLS on the strategies and priorities that Hunter LLS should implement with the Aboriginal community.

Selection process: Members appointed to represent the Hunter's Aboriginal community.

Membership/group details: Single overarching advisory group representing the Hunter region. Group guided by TORs and an advisory group Chair. The group consists of 14 members.

Meeting details: Biannual advisory group meetings.



Members of the Aboriginal Community Advisory Group November 2014 meeting

Key Achievements

Manage Weeds And Pests	
Measure	Achieved
Area (ha) of pest plant control measures implemented	712

Protect And Conserve Land, Biodiversity And Native Vegetation	
Measure	Achieved
Number of conservation covenants or other agreements attached to title negotiated	13
Area (ha) protected	1,320
Area (ha) of terrestrial native vegetation enhanced/rehabilitated	5,432
Area (ha) of terrestrial native vegetation protected by fencing	641
Area (ha) of land treated and/or protected from soil erosion by engineering	53
Area (ha) of land managed for sustainable grazing	4,270

Community Involvement and Support	
Measure	Achieved
Number of awareness raising events such as demonstrations, field days or study tours conducted	157
Number of participants who attended in days	4,076
Number of written products such as brochures, newsletters, posters or fact sheets developed	175
Number of training sessions, workshops, seminars or other skills and training events conducted	145
Number of participants in person in days	1,153
Number of community groups OR projects assisted	58

Protect Rivers, Wetlands And Coastal Environments	
Measure	Achieved
Area (ha) of riparian native vegetation protected by fencing	55
Streambank length (km) of riparian vegetation protected	5
Area (ha) planted to riparian native species	11
Number of stream bank engineering works	12

Length (m) of stream bed stabilised	250
Number of stream bed stabilisation sites	1
Number of off-stream (alternative) watering sites installed	32
Length (km) of streambank protected from stock	2
Area (ha) of wetland native vegetation protected by fencing	76
Area (ha) of wetland native vegetation enhanced/rehabilitated	728
Area (ha) planted to wetland native species	6
Area (ha) of coastal native vegetation enhanced/rehabilitated	417

Animal Biosecurity & Welfare

Successful management of emergency animal diseases (EADs)

During 2014 all Local Land Services regions successfully worked with Department of Primary Industries to minimise the impacts of EADs on trade, production, the environment and public health and wellbeing. This was achieved through:

- Emergency animal disease Investigations
- Preparing for and responding to EAD Incidents
- Inspecting piggeries for swill feeding
- Submitting brains from suitable cases to exclude Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE and scrapie)

Measure	Achieved
Number of investigations to exclude an EAD	56
Number of training exercises conducted by region	1
Number of staff that participated in a EAD response during 2014	12
Number of (at risk) pig properties inspected for swill feeding	6
Number of sudden death investigations to exclude anthrax	4
Number of Anthrax incidents managed	0
Number of Hendra incidents managed	0
Number of cattle and sheep brains collected and submitted to exclude TSE	23

Improving market access for NSW livestock and products, supported by adequate and relevant surveillance information.

During 2014 all Local Land Services regions successfully worked with Department of Primary Industries to ensure market access for NSW was supported by adequate and relevant surveillance information. This was achieved through:

- A network of District Veterinarians and Biosecurity Officers undertaking disease investigations to maximise likelihood of early detection of notifiable exotic and endemic diseases
- Managing Property Identification Codes for all holdings with stock
- Certifying holdings to enable live exports

- Entering surveillance events in the electronic Livestock Health Management System
- Submitting articles (case reports) to the DPI-LLS Animal Health Surveillance News
- Sampling sentinel herds and managing light traps as part of the National Arbovirus Monitoring Program (NAMP)
- Regional surveillance projects
- Sale yard inspections.

Measure	Achieved
Number of District Veterinarians (as at 31 Dec 2014)	4
Number of specialist Animal Biosecurity Officers (as at 31 Dec 2014)	3
Number of disease investigations: visits	398
Number of disease investigations: telephone	1,115
Total number of PICs	14,142
Total number of PICs that required active management during 2014 (new, amalgamated, subdivided)	1,372
Number of articles submitted to DPI-LLS Animal Health Surveillance News	0
Number of NAMP sentinel herds	37
Number of regional surveillance projects	1
Number of sale yard inspections	93

Animal welfare standards are effectively managed to allow market access and meet community expectations.

During 2014 all Local Land Services regions successfully worked with DPI to ensure the welfare of stock grazing on rated land meets community and industry expectations and allows market access for NSW products. This was achieved through:

- District Veterinarians and Livestock Officers, at the requests of the RSPCA, providing advice to stock managers and enforcement agencies in “failure to feed” cases under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.
- Animal welfare is effectively managed in incidents and emergencies (including flood and fire).

Measure	Achieved
Number of ‘failure to feed’ cases attended	42
Number of incidents and emergencies requiring animal welfare management	0

The negative impacts of established diseases and pest of animal are minimised in NSW.

During 2014 all Local Land Services regions successfully worked with DPI to assist industry to manage the priority diseases that exist in NSW. This was achieved through the delivery of the following endemic disease programs:

- Maintaining all of NSW a Footrot Protected Area - NSW Footrot control program
- Maintaining the NSW Beef herd's Bovine Johne's disease (BJD) Protected Area Status - National BJD program
- Supporting producer groups to form regional biosecurity groups to manage and prevent the spread of OJD into areas with low rates -I Ovine Johne's disease (OJD) management program
- Cattle Tick and Tick Fever
- NSW Sheep Lice Program
- *Cysticercus bovis*
- Other notifiable disease investigations and management

Measure	Achieved
Total number of lameness investigations to exclude sheep footrot	6
Number of footrot infected flocks under management to eradicate footrot during 2014	0
Number disease investigations to exclude BJD	131
Number of BJD traces investigated	50
Number of BJD infected herds under property disease management plans	8
Number of OJD Regional Biosecurity Areas	0
Number of disease investigations to exclude Cattle Tick or Tick Fever	0
Number of producers provided with advice on sheep lice control	6
Number of <i>Cysticercus bovis</i> field investigations	0

NSW manages residue or contaminant risks in livestock production and significant zoonotic risks from animal diseases.

During 2014 all Local Land Services regions successfully worked with DPI to ensure:

- trade is not disrupted by residues or contaminants in livestock or livestock products
- human health is not at risk from contaminants and
- people are safeguarded from significant animal diseases that also affect humans (i.e.zoonoses).

This was ensured by:

- Prompt investigation of all residue cases originating the from National Residue Survey
- Property management plans (PMPs) for all properties with residue contamination with grazing animals
- Delivery of the National Organochlorine Management Program
- Management of lead and other toxicity cases with residue implications

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaison with NSW Public Health Units to ensure knowledge of any zoonotic incidents are shared between the organisations • Investigation of any relevant wildlife or feral animal diseases. 	
Measure	Achieved
Number of Organochlorine Management and other trace back residue investigations	0
Number of holdings with current OC and other residues Property Management Plans	6
Number of lead and other toxicity cases managed	4
Number of disease events referred to Public Health Unit	0

Invasive Species	
<p>Local Land Services has responsibility to lead the coordination of strategic control programs in regions where invasive species threaten Biosecurity. The key focus of the work is aimed at reducing the impact of endemic species (i.e. declared) and prioritising the exclusion or eradication of emerging and new species. LLS achieves this work through collaboration and where necessary compliance and enforcement services with landholders and local, state and commonwealth stakeholders who all share responsibility and the benefits for managing invasive species.</p>	
Measure (Wild Dogs)	Achieved
Number of wild dog management plans	13
Number of land managers participating in on-ground strategic baiting programs	1,223
Number of integrated aerial baiting programs for wild dogs	2
LLS financial resources committed to wild dog management	\$84,000
Measure (Foxes)	Achieved
Number of land managers participating with fox baiting programs	114
Number of group control programs	7
Measure (Rabbits)	Achieved
Number of land managers participating with rabbit baiting programs	53
Measure (Feral Pigs)	Achieved
Number of land managers participating with feral pig baiting programs	21
Number of group control programs	1
Measure (Other LLS Activities)	Achieved
LLS full time equivalent positions committed to managing invasive species	8

Number of training and workshop days aimed at building the capacity of land managers to undertake effective invasive species management	49
Number of land managers participating with training programs and development workshops	420

Emergency Response

LLS has a responsibility to provide emergency management roles in prevention, preparedness, response and recovery for biosecurity emergencies and natural disasters. LLS is a supporting government agency under the Agriculture and Animal Services Function Area (AASFA), so it must ensure that resources of LLS are available during a natural disaster or biosecurity emergency. The AASFA allocates the responsibilities for emergency management and the measures below reflect those responsibilities.

Prevention – Building capacity in the community to minimise the impacts of emergencies on agriculture and animals

Measure	Achieved
Number of regional industry <u>strategies</u> that LLS has been involved with that assists with prevention and/or building capacity to minimise the impacts of emergencies on agriculture and animals.	1
Number of regional industry <u>groups</u> that LLS has been involved with that assists with prevention and/or building capacity to minimise the impacts of emergencies on agriculture and animals.	1

Preparation – Building capacity in LLS and the community to prepare for and reduce the impact of emergencies affecting agriculture and animals.

Measure	Achieved
% of staff identified in the regional Emergency Response Team that are trained to the applied level.	21%
Number of LLS staff that have been trained to the introduction level	17
Number of LLS staff that have been trained to the applied level	15
Number of LLS staff that have been trained beyond the applied level	3

Response – Ensuring an effective, coordinated response to emergencies impacting on agriculture and animals

Measure	Achieved
Number of estimated working days devoted to emergency responses	71
List of emergency responses participated in	1

Recovery - helping communities recover from the impacts of an emergency affecting agriculture and animals

Measure	Achieved
Number of natural disaster response reports that have been prepared and submitted to the Regional Director	0
Number (and location) of natural disaster declarations that have been made as a result of LLS preparing natural disaster reports.	0