



Local Land  
Services  
Hunter

# Local Annual Report 2015





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## Acknowledgments

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Local Land Services or the user's independent adviser.

# Foreword

## Team building

2015 was a period of great learning experiences. Our staff members have skills in many different disciplines, and they are building strong relationships with their work colleagues to utilise the range of expertise required to create an effective operating team. Individually, staff members are refining their own skills and, collectively, they are finding new, exciting and cost effective ways of improving the delivery and quality of the services we offer to our community.

Through the efforts of our team, we have improved communications with our community members. This has provided valuable information to our Board and General Manager to allow us to refine our strategic approaches to prioritise the needs of our customers. We have also focussed on improving our communications and accountability to our New South Wales and Australian Government stakeholders.

Behind the successes of 2015, many of which are highlighted in this report, there has been a huge amount of back-room work. We have been working on reducing our administrative costs to enable more of our budget to be spent on projects and services for our stakeholders, ratepayers and other members of our community. We continue to work on developing processes for measuring outcomes to show that investments are delivering value for money.

Risk management is an extremely important aspect of our governance. Our risk register has been further developed to ensure that it aligns with Local Land Services risk management across the state. It includes compliance obligations with legislation and government policies. In some of the services we deliver, the risk to human and animal health and to the environment are extremely high. We are working with staff to go beyond just having registers and plans on our shelves. We are working to develop our culture of care and safety being front of mind for all.

Our approach to team building is a combination of top down and bottom up. Both are helping to improve our knowledge of issues in our region, deepen our relationships and collaborate on smart ideas and solutions.

## Outreach

Our primary objective in improving our processes and systems is to ensure that we can provide high quality and relevant services to our community to inspire and enable them to increase their productivity and protect our natural resources.



Not surprisingly, community members are conducting enterprises at different levels, some are very experienced, and some are newcomers. Our obligation and our challenge is to provide appropriate services through industry and community groups and in partnership with corporations, government agencies and local governments that address the needs of our broad customer base.

## Feedback

The growing number of people attending our field days, requesting information and providing positive comments, indicates that we are making progress. We still have a long way to go but are heading in the right direction.

2015 was the year of a huge flood in the Lower Hunter area. Our team was exceptional in the contributions they made to help our community in their time of need. They worked with NSW Department of Primary Industries and other government agencies and emergency groups to assist during the deluge and later to assist farmers to get back on track. They received much appreciation for their efforts. Our Board was very proud of them.

## Acknowledgement

I am extremely fortunate to have the support of a very committed board: Peter Bishop Jnr, Ron Campbell, James Clark, Daryl Dutton, Tony Hegarty and Ted Laurie. They have a wide range of relevant skills and experience and a large number of contacts in our region. They are our eyes and ears, each giving willingly of their time and making very significant contributions.

Our General Manager, Brett Miners, is equally committed and works tirelessly to help Hunter Local Land Services provide high quality and cost effective services.

# Hunter region at a glance



## Hunter region at a glance

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

## Natural resources

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

The Ramsar listed Hunter Estuary and Myall Lakes systems are nationally and internationally significant wetland sites for migratory and resident shorebirds, while Port Stephens Great Lakes Marine Park 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 estuaries and coastal waters support production of oysters and other fish and crustaceans.

## 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 region that are of state, national and international significance.

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.

## 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 directly invest in the biosecurity, animal welfare and emergency services functions of Hunter Local Land Services.

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. 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 pest animals, prepare for emergencies, protect livestock from disease, and manage native vegetation, are consistent across the region.

# 2015 local achievements

VISITED  
**482**  
PROPERTIES FOR ANIMAL HEALTH



**1,627 ha**  
MANAGED FOR SUSTAINABLE GRAZING




TRAINED  
**427**  
LANDHOLDERS IN PEST ANIMAL CONTROL



**2,649**  
PEOPLE GAINED NEW SKILLS




THROUGH  
**124**  
TRAINING EVENTS

 ISSUED  
**71,205**  
DOG BAITS OVER 1360 HOLDINGS

**5497 ha**  
UNDER LONG TERM GRAZING PERMITS



ENGAGED  
**2,233**  
PEOPLE THROUGH 66 FIELD DAYS, DEMONSTRATIONS AND STUDY TOURS



# Local Land Services goals

Local Land Services aligns all of its work with its mission of being a customer-focused business that enables improved primary production and better management of natural resources. The strategic direction of Local Land Services is summarised in four organisational goals.

Resilient,  
self-reliant and  
prepared local  
communities

Biosecure, profitable,  
productive and  
sustainable primary  
industries

Healthy, diverse,  
connected  
natural  
environments

Board members  
and staff who are  
collaborative,  
innovative and  
commercially-focused

# Resilient, self-reliant and prepared local communities



## Agricultural production

We support primary industries and agricultural production by providing a range of agricultural extension services to producers.

Our priority is to build the capacity of local producers to improve primary production and natural resource management.

## Emergency management and natural disaster relief

With the lead agency, the NSW Department of Primary Industries, we manage livestock disease emergencies and biosecurity events involving plants, animals and pest insects. We also work alongside other agencies to provide vital support in emergencies where agricultural industries are impacted, such as flood and bushfire.

Our priority is to minimise the impacts to agriculture and animals from biosecurity incidents, emergencies and natural disasters by effectively responding to these events and ensuring industries and communities are prepared and able to recover quickly.

We're working to prepare the community for floods and improve the effectiveness of the Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme in reducing the impacts of river flooding.

Supporting the community to adapt to climate risk is also a priority. Across the region increasing climate variability, rising temperatures, changed fire regimes and more extreme weather events are likely. Coastal areas will also become vulnerable to sea level rise, storm surges and erosion.

## Aboriginal communities

The Aboriginal community holds valuable knowledge about natural resource management that can be shared to contribute to the sustainable future of our landscape. We're working to promote indigenous cultural awareness and enhance engagement throughout our region.

Our goal is to support Aboriginal communities in caring for Country, particularly through employment and training opportunities to build skills and capacity in land management.

"John and I thoroughly enjoyed the workshop you ran... We learnt so much, and are really excited about managing our property in a sustainable way. Thanks for being a big part of us feeling like we have a support network to enable us to get the information and help we need to manage our property in the way we want to." – Participant, Property Planning Workshop

<b>Agricultural production</b>	
Participants at training events	678
Area of (ha) land managed for sustainable grazing	1627
<b>Emergency Management</b>	
Number of LLS staff that have been trained to the introduction level	10
Number of LLS staff that have been trained to the applied level	9
List of emergency responses participated in	2
<b>Drought assistance and other natural disaster relief</b>	
List of emergency responses participated in	2
<b>Aboriginal communities</b>	
Area of Aboriginal Cultural Values managed (ha)	6.2
Number of Aboriginal Sites Managed	2

# Biosecure, profitable, productive and sustainable primary industries

Biosecurity	
Livestock export certificates issued	50
Number of staff that participated in a Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) response in 2015	4
% staff with training in EM/biosecurity	29
Livestock health	
Number general consultations by Vets and Biosecurity Officers	1312
Number of District Veterinarians (as at 31 Dec 2015)	5 (3.27 EFT)
Number of specialist Animal Biosecurity Officers (as at 31 Dec 2015)	7
Number of disease investigations: visits	482
Total number of PICs	12,860
Number of NAMP sentinel herds	5
Number of sale yard inspections	229
Stock management and identification	
Number of permits issued for moving stock	62
Number of property identification codes issued	331
Maintaining travelling stock reserves	
Area of travelling stock reserves managed in region (ha)	6,987
Protecting our agricultural industry	
Number of investigations to exclude an EAD	130
Number of sudden death investigations to exclude anthrax	2
Number of cattle and sheep brains collected and submitted to exclude TSE	22
Pest animal and insect control	
Area (ha) wild dog control measures using 1080 baits	744,060
Number of wild dog management plans in place	15
Number of training and workshops aimed at building the capacity of land managers to undertake invasive species management	29
Number of land managers participating with training programs and workshops	427
Holdings involved in 1080 wild dog baiting	1360

## Biosecurity

Biosecurity risks such as animal and plant pests and diseases can impact on our agricultural production, international market access or environment.

Our priority is responding to, and managing, animal biosecurity and welfare issues, including livestock health surveillance and certification; and responding to and managing plant biosecurity issues.

## Protecting our agricultural industry

To support primary producers we encourage and promote sustainable agricultural practices and increase the productivity of primary production.

We're also committed to supporting landholders in dealing with the impacts of soil degradation. Many soils in the region are at risk of some form of soil degradation, and some are at risk of irreversibly losing soil health and function.

## Pest animal and weed control

Invasive pests can impact significantly on the productivity and profitability of agriculture.

Our role is to support land managers and producers in managing pest animals – especially wild dogs, pigs, and emerging pest animals such as deer.

Another high priority is supporting land managers and producers to manage existing weeds such as pasture weeds and environmental woody weeds, and prevent the spread of new and emerging weeds which can impact negatively on agriculture. We're committed to improving the coordination of weed management in the region.



'I was delighted to meet you the other night at the Allyn Paterson Williams Wild Dog Control Association, your presentation was excellent. I learnt a lot from it and I would be delighted to participate in your baiting programmes, whenever they are taking place in our district.'  
- Attendee at Wild Dog Control Association meeting





# Healthy, diverse, connected natural environments

## Natural resource management and native vegetation

Healthy ecosystems underpin successful, productive agricultural businesses and communities.

We support healthy environments and biodiverse ecosystems across the Hunter region by assisting landholders and communities to improve the quality of their land, soil, vegetation and water through grants and funding for on-ground projects, partnerships and training.

Our goal is to improve the water quality and condition of priority rivers, estuaries, and nationally and internationally important wetlands such as the Myall Lakes and Hunter estuary wetland Ramsar sites.

We're working to connect priority areas of native vegetation in the Hunter. They key focus areas are land around the Greater Blue Mountains and Barrington Tops World Heritage Areas, and the Liverpool Ranges. We're aiming to improve the condition of native vegetation and riparian areas, extend habitat for threatened flora and fauna, and enhance existing wetland vegetation extent and quality. We're also working to maintain or improve the condition of native vegetation.

We're focussed on implementing landscape-scale approaches to address threats to the natural environment. In particular, we're supporting land managers to rehabilitate degraded habitat, manage weeds and pests, and contribute to the recovery of threatened ecological communities.

### Working with Landcare

We support and engage new and existing Landcare networks and groups, community and industry partners, to undertake on-ground works and capacity building activities. Working with Landcare NSW and NSW Government, we're aiming to improve land and water ecosystem management, soil health, and native vegetation protection.

"I am extremely happy with the level of support that we have received from the Hunter LLS branch personnel over the past couple of years. Thank you so much for the professional and approachable way you have assisted us with our property and stock." - Recipient, Biodiversity Grant

Natural resource management	
Number of conservation covenants or other agreements attached to title negotiated	3
Area (ha) protected	91
Number of voluntary conservation agreements negotiated	34
Area (ha) protected	1,671
Area (ha) of land managed for sustainable grazing	1,627
Native vegetation	
Area (ha) of terrestrial native vegetation enhanced/rehabilitated	234
Area (ha) of terrestrial native vegetation protected by fencing	20
Area (ha) planted to terrestrial native species	36
Area (ha) of wetland native vegetation enhanced/rehabilitated	203
Area (ha) of coastal native vegetation enhanced/rehabilitated	10



Following the April 2015 storm, long-term Millers Forest residents and beef farmers Selby and Gloria Green wanted to ensure their community was better prepared for future flooding events.

The couple, who are active members of their community, instigated a public meeting with residents, Hunter Local Land Services, State Emergency Service (SES) and Office of Environment and Heritage to discuss the flood. The meeting helped to foster working relationships between the community and the agencies.

Based at the top of Raymond Terrace Road, Selby and Gloria felt they were ideally positioned to assist neighbouring properties and applied for a grant through Hunter Local Land Services to purchase several two-way radios for communicating during emergencies .

The Millers Forest-Duckenfield community now has one resident who is an active member of the SES and a 'phone tree' to share information among residents and reduce the volume of calls to SES during an emergency. The community is also working to purchase a camera to allow remote monitoring of the river height.

Selby and Gloria were among several residents involved in a pilot of a new Flood Readiness Kit being developed by Hunter Local Land Services, and are also working with the SES on a community flood plan.

As a result of the community's efforts, led by Selby and Gloria, the Millers Forest- Duckenfield community will be better prepared for future floods.



Millers Forest residents and beef farmers Selby and Gloria Green wanted to ensure their community was prepared for future flooding events in the Hunter.

## In our community

## Assisting hunter landholders to be flood ready

### The challenge

The Hunter super storm in April 2015 resulted in more than \$105 million of immediate damages to the primary industries sector in the Lower Hunter, with substantial losses of livestock, crop, pasture, fodder stores, farming infrastructure and riverbank erosion. In the wake of the flood, Hunter Local Land Services set out to help rural landholders be better prepared for future flooding events in the Hunter.

### Work undertaken

Hunter Local Land Services developed a 'Farm Flood Readiness Kit' for landholders living on flood plains. The kit is designed to assist landholders develop a plan for how they will protect and provide for their livestock and farm infrastructure. It includes information on reducing on-farm risks and accessing emergency information. Hunter Local Land Services will continue to conduct a series of face-to-face workshops to help landholders work through the kit as it applies to their properties.

### Benefits

- Greater landholder awareness of how to make their property more flood-ready
- Informed, prepared flood plain communities that value working together
- Increased responsibility being taken by landholders for their livestock
- More connected communities, building relationships between landholders, and with Hunter Local Land Services
- Less livestock losses and reduced economic costs to farmers in future flooding events
- Reduction in the severity of first response, and recovery assistance costs
- Reduction in the time taken to return to pre-flood levels of productivity
- Improved understanding of responsible landholder in case of emergency

### Key achievement

The kit was developed in consultation with local farmers, and trialled with a select local group of primary producers. Feedback on the kit from those landholders involved in the pilot was very positive. The Farm Flood Readiness Kit is due for release March 2016.

### Total investment

approx \$90,000

### In collaboration with

Hunter Region State Emergency Services (SES), local residents and primary producers.



"So much of the devastation seen in April 2015 was preventable. There are some very simple measures we're helping landholders to put in place that will ensure less stress and loss in the future." - Skye Moore, Hunter Flood Recovery Officer

## Partnership to raise awareness of disease risk

### The challenge

Feral pigs can carry many serious infectious zoonotic diseases which can be passed from animals to humans. With high populations of feral pigs in the Upper Hunter, local landholders and hunters needed to be informed about the risks, safety procedures and preventative measures when hunting and handling these pest animals.

### Work undertaken

In partnership with NSW Hunter New England Health, Hunter Local Land Services communicated key information to the community through local and social media, and onsite presentations at various key agricultural events in the Upper Hunter. The two organisations have focused on educating landholders, hunters and students who work with livestock and/or in the control of pest animals.

### Benefits

- Increased awareness of the risks associated with zoonotic diseases
- Better sharing of information and disease tracking data between animal and human health agencies
- More widespread discussion in the media and community, and with youth and local hunters
- Greater availability of Q-Fever testing and vaccinations in local medical centres
- Greater awareness of hygiene and personal safety and protection measures
- Rural communities reporting better health due to awareness and minimisation of disease exposure
- Improved understanding of health and vaccinations for dogs and livestock
- Greater understanding of importance of feral animal control for personal/livestock health

### Key achievement

In partnership with NSW Hunter New England Health, Hunter Local Land Services communicated key information to the community through local and social media, and onsite presentations at various key agricultural events in the Upper Hunter. The two organisations have focused on informing and advising landholders, hunters and students who work with livestock or in the control of pest animals.

### Total investment

\$23,500

### In collaboration with

NSW Hunter New England Population Health; Department of Primary Industries



"Feral pigs can carry many infectious zoonotic diseases. There are recommended precautions for the correct handling of these animals and landholders should ensure they adhere to these practices to protect themselves from disease risks."

- Dr. Jane Bennett, District Veterinarian

## Sustainable solution for free range farmer

### The challenge

Lower Hunter landholder and free range poultry farmer, Garth Short, was running a modest, but prosperous operation of up to 400 chickens. In 18 months, foxes took up to 250 chickens from his farm, resulting in a production downturn. With plans to grow a long-term, sustainable business and lifestyle of living entirely off the land, Garth needed a manageable solution.

### Work undertaken

Working with Hunter Local Land Services and the NSW Department of Primary Industries, Garth gained tools and information to better manage and grow his enterprise. He undertook training through Hunter Local Land Services in invasive species control, and with the support of a small funding grant for on-ground works, Garth installed infrastructure and laid over 100 baits as ongoing control measures. He is now looking at planting 500 trees for windbreak and shade to support rotational grazing

### Benefits

- Improved sustainability of his enterprise
- Increased productivity (Garth now has up to 3,000 chickens and spends his time on prosperous farm work)
- Coordinated management of pest issue enabling more, diversified farming opportunities
- Improved environmental awareness and implementation of better grazing practices
- Improved pasture quality
- Increased information/learning sharing through newly created cooperative of small poultry farmers
- More advocacy for environmentally-friendly farming practices



### Key achievement

Providing a range of integrated support services and a small grant, Hunter Local Land Services has enabled Garth to focus on his farming operation, significantly growing it in size and productivity, enabling his family to live sustainably and maintain best practice and quality.

### Total investment

\$14,584

### In collaboration with

Department of Primary Industries



"In a little over a year, I've gone from having quite a stagnant farming operation due to an unmanaged pest situation, to being able to grow my business significantly and take it in new directions." - Garth Short, Free Range Poultry Farmer

## Tackling invasive weeds in Glendonbrook

### The challenge

In rural Glendonbrook, north-east of Singleton, infestations of dense-growing African Olive and Lantana were significantly impacting the area's biodiversity and productivity. Both weeds are renowned for changing the floristic structure of bushland areas, invading pasture land, impacting cattle management, encouraging the presence of invasive pest animals and making creeks and other areas inaccessible.

### Work undertaken

In partnership with Singleton Shire Landcare Network and Glendonbrook catchment landholders, Hunter Local Land Services commenced a three year project involving technical advice, demonstrations and the use of basal bark spraying, splatter-gun treatments and manual removal of the weeds. Further field days and workshops are planned for 2016, with native tubestock and seed on offer to landholders.

### Benefits

- Increase in land productivity for beef producers in the Glendonbrook catchment
- Increase in the community's willingness to share weed management ideas and experiences
- Greater awareness of modern weed management techniques that offer maximum impact
- Improved ecological conditions for Glendonbrook's native landscape
- Positive attitude shift towards adopting new weed management techniques in ongoing practices
- Increase in weed management conversations between landholders across neighboring catchments
- Awareness of the need for future involvement from absentee landholders

### Key achievement

With six months remaining in the project, 16 landholders have been involved in undertaking weed control activities on over 263.5 hectares and along 15.5 kilometres of creek. Tubestock and seed have been planted to rehabilitate the affected areas. Following the success of the initiative, similar programs are now being undertaken in other areas.

### Total investment

\$130,000

### In collaboration with

NSW Environmental Trust; Singleton Shire Landcare Network; Hunter Catchment Contribution



"Following the success of the project in the Glendonbrook catchment and the positive interest and involvement of landholders, adjoining properties in neighbouring catchments also got involved." - Lorna Adlem, Projects Officer

# Office locations

## **Paterson**

816 Tocal Road  
Paterson  
Phone: (02) 4930 1030

## **Kooragang**

Schoolmasters House,  
Schoolhouse Road,  
Ash Island via Hexham  
Phone: (02) 4964 9308

## **Singleton\***

98 John St  
Singleton  
Phone: (02) 6572 2944

## **Taree**

98 Victoria Street  
Taree  
Phone: (02) 6551 8994  
9.00am to 12 noon

## **Maitland Saleyards\***

52 Kyle Street  
Rutherford  
Phone: (02) 4932 8866

## **Merriwa\***

181 Bettington Street  
Merriwa  
Phone: (02) 6548 2175  
Mon-Tue 9.00 am to 4.00 pm  
Wed 9.00 am to 3.30 pm

## **Wingham\***

15 Isabella Street  
Wingham  
Phone: (02) 6553 4233

## **Tocal\***

815 Tocal Rd  
Paterson  
Phone: (02) 4939 8967

## **Wyong**

3/34-36 Pacific Hwy  
Wyong  
Phone: (02) 4355 8200

## **Scone\***

2 Flemington Drive  
Scone  
Ph 6540 2400.  
8.30am – 4.30pm

Opening hours are 8.30 am to 4.30 pm unless otherwise stated.

Contact offices marked with an (\*) for enquiries on rates

Hunter Local Land Services  
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