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Disclaimer
The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of the report January 2015 to December 2015. 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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**Vision**
Resilient communities in productive healthy landscapes

**Mission**
To be a customer-focused business that enables improved primary production and better management of natural resources

**Values**
- Accountability
- Collaboration
- Innovation
- Integrity
- Performance
- Service
- Trust

**Goals**

1. Resilient, self-reliant and prepared local communities.

2. Biosecure, profitable, productive and sustainable primary industries.

3. Healthy, diverse, connected natural environments.

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

Local Land Services provides advice, services and assistance to land managers in NSW that helps them produce more, in a sustainable manner. We also protect the quality of the NSW produce brand through many of our services.

Local Land Services is well placed to deliver these services to customers in an integrated, independent way.

This 2015 activity report provides an overview of how we are meeting the needs of local land managers and working with regional communities to achieve our goals. It gives an overview of the incredibly broad range of on-ground services being offered to help achieve our vision of resilient communities in productive, healthy landscapes.

Some statewide achievements during 2015 include:

- 5,170 property visits by vets and biosecurity officers
- 8,160 general consultations by vets and biosecurity officers
- 1,600 saleyard inspections
- 1,850 livestock export certificates issued
- 21,250 participants at training events
- 396,000 hectares protected through voluntary conservation agreements.

Many projects and programs would not be possible without the support of our funding partners—the National Landcare Programme via the Australian Government and the Catchment Action NSW program, supported by the NSW Government.

Our integrated and independent service delivery model provides greater opportunities to work with land managers and the community to improve primary production within healthy landscapes. With the adoption of the 2016-26 State Strategic Plan and local strategic plans, we have clear direction on the way forward.

In the year ahead we will continue to strengthen our governance and service delivery to ensure we satisfy the needs of our customers. We will implement the necessary changes from the Natural Resource Commission’s Pest Animal Review and continue to implement the Weeds Review.

We will keep progressing with the already successful Landcare Coordinators Initiative, and we will deliver on the requirements of the biosecurity and biodiversity legislation reforms.

We will also consider how we prioritise and invest our funds into the future, with a focus on:

- establishing resilient, self-reliant and prepared local communities
- ensuring biosecure, profitable, productive and sustainable primary industries
- creating healthy, diverse and connected natural environments.

By working together, Local Land Services will deliver and achieve great things for rural communities and NSW.

Tim de Mestre
Chair, Local Land Services
About Local Land Services

We work with land managers and the community to improve primary production within healthy landscapes. We also assist rural and regional communities to be profitable and sustainable into the future.

We connect people with groups, information, support and funding to improve agricultural productivity and better manage our natural resources.

Local Land Services is one statewide organisation offering integrated and independent services, delivered regionally and tailored for each community, industry and landscape.

Local Land Services is governed by a Board of Chairs, comprised of an independent chair and the chairs of the local boards.

The Board of Chairs reports directly to the Minister for Primary Industries and is responsible for oversight of Local Land Services’ strategy and governance. This includes ensuring Local Land Services is aligned with NSW Government priorities.

Local regions provide our front-line services. We are uniquely placed to provide on-ground and face-to-face assistance to land managers throughout the state to help protect their land, business and way of life.

Each region has a local board that is responsible for communications and engagement with their local communities. They provide oversight of the following, in line with local and state priorities:

- corporate governance
- regionally-appropriate programs
- local strategic plans
- budgets.

Regions vary in geographic and organisational size and they approach their local priorities in different ways, which is why it is so important to be locally focused.
2015 achievements

Two years after the formation of Local Land Services and the organisation continues to strengthen relationships with ratepayers, landholders and communities by delivering the services and projects that meet the diverse needs of our customers. The figures below outline our achievements in the past year and the broad range of services being offered to the state.
Customer satisfaction

The Local Land Services Act 2013, our mission statement and our State Strategic Plan identify customer satisfaction as a long-term indicator of success, so we needed a benchmark to track our customer service performance over time.

In October 2015, we engaged consultants Instinct & Reason to contact 2,200 private land managers and 100 public land managers to measure customer satisfaction via a telephone survey.

Questions covered our overall performance, complaints, communication methods, satisfaction with our services, employee values and behaviour and brand awareness.

The results show how we have performed as an entire organisation and regionally, so we will use the survey as an opportunity to improve key areas of service.

- **89%** private land managers and **97%** public land managers had heard of Local Land Services
- **75%** of land managers were extremely satisfied or satisfied with their most recent use of Local Land Services
- **63%** of private land managers are highly likely to use Local Land Services again
- **95%** of private land managers want to pass on their land in better condition than they received it
- **79%** of respondents said the frequency of contact was about right
- **2,200** private land managers and **100** public land managers surveyed across NSW
- The most used services were pest and animal management programs
- **97%** public land managers had heard of Local Land Services
Spring 2015 wild dog offensive

- **103** training courses (including public meetings, landholder education workshops, poisons training and trapping courses)
- **1,250** properties
- **34** staff supporting wild dog management
- **100** wild dog control groups participating
- **237,645+** baits
- **3,512 km** aerial bait lines
- **7.8 million HA+** ground baiting

Canid pest ejectors introduced: Innovative mechanical device for delivering poison
Regional achievements
Central Tablelands Local Land Services

The Central Tablelands region covers an area of approximately 31,365 square kilometres. It includes the major towns of Bathurst, Blayney, Cowra, Lithgow, Molong, Mudgee, Oberon and Orange and falls predominantly within Wiradjuri Aboriginal country.

The region is home to over 156,000 residents, including an indigenous population of 7,012 (4.5 per cent of the population).

Agriculturally, the region is highly diverse. Winter rainfall supports productive cropping systems. The most significant land use is grazing, followed by the production of broadacre crops. The region has increasing areas of fruit and vegetable production and viticulture.

Livestock production is also significant in the region, with sheep and cattle taking up the major share.

There are a number of pest animal species across the region, including foxes, rabbits and locusts. Reducing the impact of these pests is a priority.

Our year in review

Central Tablelands Local Land Services has focused on delivering programs to the region that help producers raise productivity, improve natural resources, protect our agricultural industries from pests and disease and respond with the community to regional and statewide emergencies, such as the Hunter floods and the response to the detection of Red Imported Fire Ants at Port Botany in Sydney.

In the past year the region was successful in gaining support from the Commonwealth National Landcare Programme, the NSW Government Catchment Action program and a number of smaller natural resource management programs. These funds were used to support projects to increase the adoption of improved land management, retain and preserve environmental assets, water, vegetation and soil.

The projects helped connect existing conservation and privately held native vegetation as well as protect specific areas.

We provided incentives to landholders to meet the National Landcare Programme and Catchment Action NSW priorities based on our priorities in the draft regional strategic plan.

Outside of these projects, the development of the community advisory groups in the areas of agricultural industries, natural resource management, cultural heritage and local government are ensuring that our services are beneficial and supportive of our producers and wider communities.

This was evident in the excellent results of the statewide customer service survey, which ranked Central Tablelands extremely high in the delivery of services to customers.

Our biosecurity team continued its work with landholders, community, industry and government to identify, prevent, eradicate and manage biosecurity risks of pests and diseases.

Our team of District Veterinarians made field visits to many sheep, cattle, goat and pig producers, diagnosing a range of animal health issues and excluding the more serious notifiable diseases. The management of endemic diseases and contaminants, in partnership with land managers, also remains an important role in managing biosecurity risks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant at Training Events</th>
<th>Hectares Protected by Conservation Agreements</th>
<th>Property Visits by Vets and Biosecurity Officers</th>
<th>General Consultations by Vets and Biosecurity Officers</th>
<th>Livestock Export Certificates Issued</th>
<th>Properties Involved in Wild Dog Spring Baiting</th>
<th>Awards for Sustainable Land Use through Small Grants to the Community</th>
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2015 activity report
Protecting and restoring ecosystems

The challenge
This project engaged private and public land managers to protect and restore ecosystems across the Central Tablelands region through a range of restoration activities, prioritising works that protect and restore nationally and state listed threatened species and ecological communities.

Work undertaken
Central Tablelands Local Land Services contracted landholders to protect land to create continuous tracts of native vegetation for species habitat and dispersal. Landholders received financial and technical support to undertake activities such as restoring understory diversity, protection of waterways and protection of remnant vegetation by managing the impact of grazing, pest animals and invasive weeds. A program of educational events also increased community awareness of issues.

Benefits
• As part of an expression of interest process more than 90 properties were visited.
• More than 900 hectares is under contract to protect and enhance native vegetation, riparian and revegetation.
• Three carp musters were held to raise awareness of pest animals and water values.
• Field days were conducted to increase knowledge of revegetation establishment techniques and riparian health.
• Project was undertaken to investigate and enhance Copper Butterfly habitat.
• Enhancement of Eucalyptus aggregata communities through protection and enhancement.
• Riverine habitat mapping of reaches of the Lachlan, Abercrombie and Macquarie Rivers.

Key achievement
• Awareness of threatened species was raised through a combination of financial incentives to landholders and capacity building events.
• Activities have been designed to be inclusive while also targeting activities to the greatest effect.

In collaboration with
• Local government
• Office of Environment and Heritage
• community fishing clubs
• land managers
• NSW Fisheries

"The group benefited, regardless of previous experience, from the one on one instruction, on preparation and sowing of a tree/shrub plantation for livestock and native fauna protection."
- Project participant
Impact of worms on sheep meat production

The challenge
Internal parasites are a major problem for the Australian sheep industry and the most important health and production problem for sheep on the Central Tablelands. Anthelmintic resistance is an increasing problem for farmers who need a range of measures to control gastrointestinal worms rather than simply relying on drenches (this approach is referred to as Integrated Parasite Management or IPM). IPM has been tested and implemented for the merino industry but surprisingly little work has been done involving sheep in the prime lamb sector.

Work undertaken
Four Central Tablelands prime lamb properties were included in the study which was run from 2012 to 2015. On two of the properties an IPM approach was recommended and monitored. The other two properties were simply monitored as controls.

Benefits
- Good worm control and performance with fewer treatments and less reliance on long acting drenches, therefore reducing selection for drench resistance.
- Good worm control and performance compared to maximum worm control achieved by completely suppressing worms. This highlights the effectiveness of the IPM approach.
- Meat-breed and cross-bred sheep in good condition and grazing improved pastures were very resilient to the impact of worms (compared to merinos) with little impact on ewe and lamb liveweight, fleece weight, reproduction and mortality.
- When lamb growth rates exceeded 200g/day there was no benefit for weaning weight from drenches given to lambs before weaning.

Key achievement
- Results show that well run meat-breed enterprises on improved pastures are much less susceptible to internal parasites than merino enterprises - in turn, less drenching is required, reducing labour and selection of worms for drench resistance.

In collaboration with
- University of New England
- Charles Sturt University
- McKinnon Project at the University of Melbourne
- Funding from Meat and Livestock Australia
Central West
Local Land Services

The Central West region is home to around 110,000 people and covers the area of Grenfell, Forbes and Wellington to the western plains of Nyngan and Coonamble. Our region is home to around 14,500 Indigenous people, the second highest Indigenous population of all Local Land Services regions.

The major Aboriginal nations that the central west region overlies are the Wiradjuri, Kawambarai, Weilwan, Wongaibon.

Mixed farming production of cropping and livestock systems is dominant across the region. Wheat is the main cereal crop produced, with canola the most significant non-cereal crop. Sheep and cattle production are the dominant livestock enterprises.

The region produces a number of horticultural crops, including cherries and apples, and also supports a growing viticulture industry. It is also home to a number of natural assets, including the internationally recognised Macquarie Marshes.

Our year in review

Central West Local Land Services continued to strengthen relationships and engage with communities during 2015. An important step in engaging the community was the establishment of four Community Advisory Groups. These groups represent the following communities and areas: Aboriginal, Agriculture and Industry, Local Government and Natural Resource Management. Members come from across the Central West region and help canvas feedback on our business areas.

Throughout the region locust outbreaks had staff working closely with landholders to coordinate and supply resources. Spring and autumn campaigns encouraged community reporting with chemical, advice and spray rigs provided to landholders to manage the locust threat.

A coordinated wild dog program, funded through the Australian's Government's Drought Recovery Program, resulted in seven animals being removed through landholder training, professional trappers and support from staff. Wild dogs can have a significant impact on farming enterprises, both economically and emotionally with one animal having killed more than 60 sheep in the Dubbo area.

Sustainable agriculture and environment grants, which assist landholders to manage their land more sustainably and improve local natural resources, were awarded to more than 80 landholders in the region. These landholders will work to graze more sustainably, rehabilitate degraded soil and improve native vegetation. The project is supported by Central West Local Land Services through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme and Catchment Action NSW.

District Veterinarians continue to provide animal health services to landholders on herd issues and protect our local primary industry from disease outbreak. Of note was the mock ‘red racer’ exercise we conducted during the year. This was valuable in preparing staff for an emergency response and testing our processes.

During 2015 we also developed a draft regional strategic plan and presented this to the community for their ideas. This is a vital step in setting our strategic direction. It is very important to have our strategic plan ‘ground truthed’ with our communities.

Our year in review

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Biological weed control trials

The challenge
Controlling weeds on travelling stock reserves is an ongoing role for Central West Local Land Services. While spraying remains the key control method, it can be an expensive and time consuming exercise.
Central West Local Land Services is trialling biological weed control agents on travelling stock reserves to control weeds in an integrated program.

Work undertaken
Central West Local Land Services manages more than 106,000 hectares of travelling stock reserves, with weed management a high priority. To complement the current chemical control program Central West Local Land Services is trialling options of biological weed control.

Biological weed control is an inexpensive tool to manage particular weeds. Four field days were held across the Central West with landholders and biological weed control expert Barry Sampson. Following the field days, a number of biological control agents were released for ongoing monitoring.

Benefits
- Exploring cost effective methods to control weeds along travelling stock reserves.
- An opportunity for information sharing between landholders.
- Encouraging integrated weed control programs on public and private land.
- Reducing the expense on weed control programs.
- Fewer weeds found on travelling stock reserves.

Key achievement
- The trials will lead to an integrated weed control program on travelling stock reserves.
- Biological weed control will complement the current chemical program for a more cost effective result.
- Involving the community through field days will increase landholder capacity to control weeds.

In collaboration with
- National Landcare Programme
- Barry Sampson (WeedBioControl)

“Biological weed control is another tool to manage particular weeds on TSRs. It is inexpensive due to reduced chemical and labour costs.”
- Team leader, Peta Holcombe
Sheep production webinar series

The challenge
Central West Local Land Services and Sheep Connect NSW joined forces to trial an innovative approach to engage time-poor farming businesses.

Work undertaken
Central West Local Land Services in partnership with Sheep Connect NSW developed a sheep production webinar pilot for Central West NSW graziers to complement on-ground field days. The initial trial ‘scanning for success’ webinar attracted 19 participants and prompted expansion into a part 10-part lamb production series.

Four webinars were held with more than 80 participants attending to hear the latest sheep production information available to the community. The webinars can be found at www.sheepconnectnsw.com.au.

Benefits
- The webinars resulted in improving landholder access to the latest extension advice available.
- Financial burdens relating to travel and farm absences were reduced.
- The communication channel suited to participants in remote locations or those with busy lifestyles.
- New approaches are being trialled to further engage with landholders.
- Utilised new and emerging technologies to communicate with customers.
- Working with partner organisations has reduced duplication.

Key achievement
- The project trialled an innovative approach to a receptive audience.
- The success of the first webinar sparked the current webinar series, which continues to inform, educate and engage central west graziers.

In collaboration with
- Australian Government
- SheepConnect NSW
- NSW Department of Primary Industries

"With such great feedback, webinars obviously work as information delivery tools. We will still hold field days; however can’t be everywhere at once. Webinars help us to bridge the gap."

- Livestock officer, David Trengove
Greater Sydney Local Land services

The Greater Sydney region extends from some of the most intensely urbanised localities in NSW, through to vast World Heritage protected wilderness areas, and expansive coastal waterways. The region is home to 4.6 million people, the largest urban population in Australia and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of 54,747 or 32 per cent of the population in NSW.

The important natural resources of the region underpin significant economic activity. The Greater Sydney region covers just 1.5 per cent of the land area of NSW, yet it accounts for seven per cent of the state’s agricultural output.

A third of all vegetable farms in NSW are in the Greater Sydney region. The highest value agricultural sectors are poultry, vegetables, nurseries and turf. Preservation of high value precincts such as the Hawkesbury floodplain and the orchard areas on volcanic soil at Bilpin is important in ensuring food security for Sydney.

Greater Sydney Local Land Services has an important role in the post-border management of such threats and supports Department of Primary Industries with management and response.

Our year in review

Greater Sydney Local Land Services provides advice and services to a range of landholders and managers both public and private. The region is a major gateway to NSW and the country, bringing with it many challenges in appropriately supporting the management of the region’s biosecurity risks.

In the past year we focussed on adding value to and improving the productivity of producers, reducing the impacts of feral animals and administering both state and federal funding programs aimed at improving and protecting the many natural assets of our region, particularly through the Australian Landcare Programme.

Our staff work with local growers, industry and the wider community to boost profitability and increase sustainability across the Greater Sydney region. This year we issued more than $870,000 in National Landcare Programme Grants across the region.

We deliver services on the front line to protect the economy, environment and community from the negative impacts of pests, diseases and weeds. A recent example was the detection of a nest of Red Imported Fire Ants at Port Botany. Greater Sydney was the lead agency involved with the on-ground response – more than 2,400 hectares have been inspected, involving coordination and co-operation right across the community, including hundreds of industrial and commercial enterprises and local residents.

Our biosecurity team has been empowering local landholders in the fight against invasive pest species including wild dogs and feral pigs. This year 65 farmers were accredited to bait feral animals, 350 properties were inspected for pest control and more than 900 dog baits were issued covering an area of 11,500 hectares.

We continue to support community-driven projects on the ground to protect and preserve our precious environment through funding, expert advice and training. Nearly 7,000 hectares of bushland has been improved through partnership agreements, along with 20 hectares being planted with native species.
Fire ant management program

The challenge
Red Imported Fire Ants are a serious exotic pest, aggressive in behaviour and able to inflict painful bites on humans, pets and livestock. In extreme cases, allergic reaction in humans can result in death. In November 2014, a nest of Red Imported Fire Ants was detected at Port Botany. Greater Sydney Local Land Services was the lead on-ground response agency.

Work undertaken
Two rounds of active surveillance within a two kilometre radius of the original detection site were carried out as well as:
- Five applications of insect growth regulatory (bait) were distributed within a 500 metre radius of the detection site.
- More than 2,300 residential premises were inspected and 1,300 entered and inspected.
- Nearly 750 hectares (non-residential) were inspected twice.
- More than 155 hectares of high-risk sites were inspected by odour detection dogs.
- More than 575 hectares of high-risk areas (parks, reserves, golf courses and open spaces) were inspected.
- An additional 1.5 hectare tracing site at Menangle was inspected by odour detection dogs.
- In total more than 2,400 hectares was inspected.

Benefits
More than 2,400 hectares around the initial detection site were inspected, involving coordination and co-operation from the community, including hundreds of industrial and commercial enterprises and local residents. Dozens of suspect ant samples were collected and sent for testing.

Key achievement
- No further infestation has been detected.

In collaboration with
- NSW Department of Primary Industries
- Biosecurity Queensland
- Other Local Land Services regions
- Randwick and Botany Bay Councils

“The success of this campaign is down to a whole of team effort by staff right across Local Land Services and NSW DPI.”

- Greater Sydney Local Land Services General Manager, David Hogan
Carving it up for conservation

The challenge
Raising awareness of the value of tree hollows in a landscape that has seen tens of thousands of trees disappear due to housing developments and public safety concerns. More than 150 native species in NSW are obligate hollow users.

Work undertaken
Greater Sydney Local Services is leading the way in habitat stag chainsaw techniques on the Cumberland Plain, demonstrating how trees can be rendered safe while retaining and enhancing habitat values. Five council reserve demonstration sites showcased new pruning practices to a wide range of practitioners and the public. More than 150 people attended four events.

Benefits
- Showcased innovations in reinstating hollow habitat in urban spaces.
- Improved hollow habitats for a range of native species including parrots and micro-bats.
- Captured interest and increased public awareness through widespread media coverage.
- Encouraged councils and other land managers to retain tree hollows for local wildlife.
- Increased the longevity and improved the thermal properties of artificial hollows.
- Brought council staff, Bushcare volunteers, land managers, Green Army teams and arborists together.
- Built on the strong interest created at a Hollows for Habitat forum.
- Introduced other arborists to ecologically-sensitive tree management options for their own businesses.

Key achievement
- Greater Sydney Local Land Services has led the way in introducing habitat stag chainsaw techniques on the Cumberland Plain, demonstrating that trees can be rendered safe while retaining and enhancing habitat values.
- New pruning practices have been showcased at five council reserve demonstrations.

In collaboration with
- Local councils
- Sydney Arbor Tree Services

“Alive or dead, trees containing hollows are habitat for all manner of organisms. It is time for us to rethink our approach; not all trees are hazardous.”
- Arborist, Michael Sullings
Hunter Local Land Services

The Hunter Local Land Services region covers an area of approximately 33,000 square kilometres. It takes in the local government areas of Greater Taree, Great Lakes, Gloucester, Port Stephens, Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Cessnock, Dungog, Singleton, Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter. Around 670,000 people currently live in the Hunter Local Land Services region.

The natural resources of the Hunter have enabled the development of a wide range of industries including tourism, agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries, coal mining, power generation, and recreation.

Grazing of beef cattle and sheep are major agricultural activities in the region, 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, fish and crustaceans.

Our year in review

Hunter Local Land Services is committed to developing and delivering relevant, high quality services to the local community. During 2015 we continued our work in reducing the risks of invasive pests and diseases, and supported primary industries and communities in preparing and responding to emergencies such as floods and bushfires. Following the April 2015 Hunter super storm, we developed a Farm Flood Readiness Kit to assist farmers in making their properties flood ready. The kit is designed to assist landholders in developing a plan for protecting and providing for their livestock and farm infrastructure.

Our priority is to build the capacity of local producers to improve primary production and natural resource management. In 2015 we upskilled more than 2,600 people through the delivery of 124 training events. We’ve also been working to support the community to adapt to climate risk and variability, and have been supporting our Aboriginal communities to build their skills and capacity in land management.

Our biosecurity officers have been working with private and public land managers across the Hunter to control populations of wild dogs and other invasive species to reduce their effects on livestock and the environment. During 2015 we trained 427 landholders in pest animal control, issued 71,205 dog baits and undertook baiting programs over more than 740,000 hectares throughout the region. We now have a range of new tools available to target invasive species, including camera trapping and canid pest ejectors. We’re also supporting the new funded trapper program coordinated by the Hunter Valley Combined Wild Dog Association as part of an integrated approach to ongoing wild dog control. We increased our annual budget for invasive species control across the region and also more than doubled the operating budget for our district veterinarian team, enabling them to better protect the ‘clean and green’ status of our region’s produce and safeguard our livestock and environment against invasive pests and diseases.

We support healthy environments and biodiverse ecosystems across the Hunter by assisting landholders and communities to improve the quality of their land, soil, vegetation and water. We provide grants and funding for on-ground projects, partnerships and training with assistance from Catchment Action NSW and the Australian Government’s National Landcare Programme. We’re focussed on implementing landscape-scale strategies to address threats to the natural environment. In 2015 we supported land managers in protecting 91 hectares of land under conservation covenants (attached to title) and 1,671 hectares of land through voluntary conservation agreements to rehabilitate degraded habitat, manage weeds and pests, and contribute to the recovery of threatened ecological communities.
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.

In collaboration with
• NSW 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.”

- Free range poultry farmer, Garth Short
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.

In collaboration with
- Hunter Region State Emergency Services
- 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”

- Hunter Flood Recovery Officer, Skye Moore
Murray Local Land Services

The Murray region spans more than 42,000 square kilometres across a range of environments, from the steep alpine slopes in the east to the vast native grasslands and riverine floodplains in the west.

The region’s population of around 107,000 people is concentrated along the Murray and Edward-Kolety river systems in towns such as Corowa, Moama, Deniliquin, Tocumwal, Holbrook and the city of Albury.

Land and water resources within the Murray region support diverse agricultural enterprises including cropping, grazing of sheep and cattle, and horticultural production.

The Murray region has always supported a large Aboriginal population and features many important cultural locations of state, national and international significance.

Approximately one-third of residents are directly involved in agriculture, underscoring the importance Murray Local Land Services places on working with the local community on sustainable agricultural production and natural resource management.

Our year in review

Murray Local Land Services is focused on delivering a high standard of service for the community, and in the past year has worked with individuals, groups and funding partners to increase the health and productivity of the region.

Projects are bringing communities together to share ideas and enable local decision-making through building knowledge and skills. In the past year more than 50 organisations have been funded to deliver projects that address local priorities.

To improve the community consultative framework, the Murray Local Community Advisory and Murray Aboriginal Technical Groups were established to provide valuable feedback and advice to the board.

During 2015, our investigations enabled producers to make informed decisions on treatment and prevention of disease. We supported and contributed to sustainable farm initiatives, engaging more than 900 people in events and field days.

Our biosecurity program has positively influenced livestock productivity in many ways. The program incorporates animal disease, plant pests, and disease and invasive species and helps maintain domestic and international market access for Murray region producers.

In the past year Murray Local Land Services facilitated 1080 wild dog baiting on 53 properties covering 154,075 hectares, with some landholders baiting three times. We supplied 74,733 baits for 1,200 fox baiting programs and assisted with rabbit control programs on 143 properties using 20 tonnes of bait and covering 21,447 hectares.

The organisation supports evidence-based decision making around natural resource management and increasing environmentally sustainable behaviours and practices to establish and maintain healthy, diverse and connected natural environments throughout the region. There are currently 14 projects or partnerships underway to enhance the condition of natural assets of the Murray region, spanning the full geographic breadth of the region.

These achievements are promoting the conservation of biodiversity and enhancing the functioning of natural systems within the region, to help managers establish and maintain healthy, diverse and connected natural environments over the coming years.
Engaging Upper Murray sheep farmers

The challenge
Murray Local Land Services identified a distinct lack of information flow to sheep producers within the Upper Murray area. There were no substantial existing networks to reach sheep producers, and we had very little connection with key landholders in this area to enable advisory services.

Work undertaken
Originally we planned a More Lambs More Often workshop to try and engage sheep producers, which was successful although we only reached a small number of attendees. A second workshop, which we supported, was cancelled due to a lack of response. A change of direction resulted in a very successful information night, attracting more than 50 participants (a good portion of the sheep producers in the Tumbarumba region), and receiving excellent feedback. This led to a third event in the area and generated interest for future similar events based on local producers’ needs.

Benefits
- Two more workshops are now planned for 2016 as a direct result of feedback from the sheep information night.
- Two Lifetime Ewe Management groups have been established in the region as a direct result of the first and second events, supporting producers to source further information and work through issues that arise in applying new techniques.
- More than 50 landholders have been added to the Murray Local Land Services mailing list and will be kept informed of our events and advice.
- Feedback (written and verbal) is strongly indicating that producers are pleased that we are now working in their area.

Key achievement
A strong relationship has been established between sheep producers and Murray Local Land Services, which will provide long-term benefits to the community of Upper Murray.
Two Lifetime Ewe Management groups have been established in the region and at least two more extension events are now planned for 2016 as a direct result of feedback from the sheep information night and the increased communication with Upper Murray landholders.

In collaboration with
- Meat and Livestock Australia’s Making More from Sheep program

“Great – keep updates coming. Great refreshers.”
- Tooma sheep producer
Corowa-Oaklands ovine brucellosis eradication program

The challenge

Ovine brucellosis is an infectious reproductive disease that causes chronic infection in rams and can significantly reduce lambing percentages. Several farms in the Corowa-Oaklands area were diagnosed with infection by Murray Local Land Services district veterinarians. While eradication is straightforward on a single farm, multiple infected properties increase the risk of reinfection.

Work undertaken

Regional eradication programs targeting ovine brucellosis have been successful in the Victorian Mallee and around Deniliquin. With this in mind, Murray Local Land Services held a community meeting near Corowa to raise awareness of the disease, its effect on sheep production and the benefits of eradication. Attendees were asked to join a voluntary eradication program based on successful programs in other areas. Landholder support for the program was overwhelmingly positive.

Benefits

- Program well supported by landholders.
- Promotes an increased understanding of biosecurity.
- Improved awareness of, and engagement with, Local Land Services, with all landholders in the target area being contacted by a district vet.
- The area is on track towards eradication, which would not have been possible without the collaboration between landholders and Murray Local Land Services.
- The program draws on skills from multiple areas of the business, including Animal Biosecurity and Welfare, Land Services and GIS.

Key achievement

The voluntary program, aimed at eradicating ovine brucellosis, is an excellent example of what can be achieved when landholders and Murray Local Land Services work together to solve a problem.

The program is on track for successful completion and will roll out into other areas during early 2016.

In collaboration with

- Local landholders

“The brucellosis testing has been a great asset and has given us the peace of mind that we are providing healthy rams for a productive joining. Great district program.”

- Corowa landholder, Kate Schoen
North Coast Local Land Services

The North Coast Local Land Services Region is located in north-eastern NSW, including Lord Howe Island, and covers an area of 32,050 square kilometres. The region includes 568 km of coastline and extends three nautical miles out to sea.

There are approximately 506,000 people who reside on the North Coast, including around 21,000 Indigenous Australians. The major population centres are located on the coast and are connected primarily by coastal transport routes — they include Tweed Heads, Lismore, Murwillumbah, Grafton, Coffs Harbour, Nambucca Heads, Kempsey and Port Macquarie.

The North Coast region supports a range of natural resource-based industries including beef, dairy, blueberry, macadamia, intensive horticulture, fishing and aquaculture, timber production and tourism industries.

Our year in review

North Coast Local Land Services has strengthened relationships with ratepayers, landholders and communities and continues to deliver services and projects that meet the diverse needs of the region.

In the past year, we have delivered programs throughout the region that improve natural resources, help producers raise productivity, protect our agricultural industries from pests and disease and respond with the community to regional and statewide emergencies. These include emergencies such as the Hunter floods and the response to the detection of Red Imported Fire Ants at Port Botany in Sydney and Panama tropical race 4 disease in south-east Queensland.

Our biosecurity team continued its work with landholders, community, industry and government to identify, prevent, eradicate and manage biosecurity risks of pests and diseases. Our team of District Veterinarians has made field visits to many producers diagnosing a range of animal health issues including the more serious notifiable diseases. During 2015 more than 1,700 holdings undertook 1080 baiting, while 390 landholders undertook the training courses delivered by biosecurity officers.

Healthy ecosystems underpin successful, productive primary producers and communities. With investment from Catchment Action NSW and the National Landcare Programme, we support maintain and improve the health of landscapes and seascapes on the North Coast. In the past year more than 5,000 new plantings were established under conservation agreements along with the protection of 220 hectares of threatened shorebird habitat.

In 2015 North Coast Local Land Services signed a major partnership agreement with North Coast Regional Landcare who represent 13 Landcare networks across the North Coast. With more than 270 Landcare and community groups as members, North Coast Regional Landcare provides a forum for the Landcare community across the region to come together and share ideas, experiences and issues. The partnership agreement assists North Coast Local Land Services achieve outcomes in natural resource management, sustainable agriculture and biosecurity.
Northern corridors connections project

The challenge
The Border Ranges and Wollumbin World Heritage areas and the Ballina Coastal Corridor contain populations of, and habitats for, a large number of threatened plant and animal species. These areas and their connecting corridors have the highest concentration of marsupial mammals, birdlife, reptile and frog species in eastern Australia.

Work undertaken
The project undertakes a range of activities that focus on protecting wildlife corridors, threatened species recovery and maintaining native vegetation remnants. Activities focus on improving core biodiversity corridors, improved farm production and on-ground biodiversity success stories. Project works also engage Indigenous organisations through a working on Country approach, and supporting on-ground efforts that address environmental threats and provide skills and capacity building.

Benefits
- More than 200 hectares in natural resource management works and activities achieved.
- Engaged with and built the capacity of more than 50 landholders.
- Employment of Indigenous bush regenerators involved in planning and implementation.
- Animal species protected include black bittern, eastern bristle bird, grey headed flying fox and koala.
- Plant species protected includes stinking cryptocaria and swamp orchid.
- Coordinated and planned weed control over 80 hectares in collaboration with landholders.
- Coordinated and planned baiting programs with involvement of surrounding landholders.
- Fire management of habitat programs with planning and site prioritisation underway.

Key achievement
This project has been an excellent opportunity to draw together diverse landholder groups and build partnerships to increase capacity for natural resource management as well as delivering a range of targeted land management methods to protect and improve core biodiversity corridors.

In collaboration with
WetlandCare Australia, Tweed and Ballina Shire Councils, Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC), Gugin Guddaba LALC, Githabul Rangers, Bushland Restoration Services, Northern Landcare Support Services, Lantana Master, Environmental Training and Employment, Wildsearch and Reconeco.
Focus on healthy soils

The challenge
North Coast Local Land Services celebrated the 2015 International Year of Soils through a range of projects and activities that focused on the importance of soil. Sustainable soil and land management is central to ensuring a healthy environment, productive food systems and improved rural livelihoods.

Work undertaken
The Best Management Practices of Carbon Management project was developed to investigate innovative ways to increase soil organic carbon levels and reduce nitrous oxide emissions. There were 27 demonstration farms across a range of industries including grazing (beef, sheep and dairy) and cropping (vegetables, herbs and fodder) extending from Richmond catchment in the north to the Hastings catchment in the south and inland to the Tablelands.

Benefits
- Nearly 130 demonstration farms participated.
- Excellent capacity building with many participants involved in soil samples and analysis for the first time.
- Increased knowledge and awareness of the potential agronomic benefits of increasing soil organic carbon.
- Results indicated a positive response to organic soil amendments applied and adoption of innovative practice.
- Soil organic carbon percentage change found in the surface 10 cm of soil over the life of the project.
- Farms using an on-farm resource for benefit rather than waste, e.g. irrigating dairy effluent onto pastures.
- Farmers able to choose a change of practices that interested them and that suited their farm, operation and landscape.
- The project did not force change but rather offered an opportunity for the landholder to experiment, to trial, without the need for full cost recovery.

Key achievement
The project showed an increase in soil organic carbon levels in most sites and, while it may not have been statistically relevant, the results were sufficient to encourage the farmers to continue those practices, modify those practices or seek alternatives to achieve increased soil organic carbon levels.

In collaboration with
Northern Landcare Services, Clarence Landcare, Bellingen Landcare, Macleay Landcare, Hastings Landcare, Southern New England Landcare, GLENRAC, Granite Borders Landcare, NSW Department of Primary Industries and Woodlots and Wetlands.
North West Local Land Services

The North West region spans from Quirindi in the south and north to the Queensland border and Bendemeer in the east to Walgett in the west. The region has an area of approximately 82,000 square kilometres, a distance of more than 440 kilometres.

It is home to around 113,000 people who live mainly along the rivers and their tributaries with major regional centres of Moree, Narrabri, Gunnedah and Tamworth.

The Kamilaroi nation are the traditional custodians of the region; there are 14 local land councils representing some 13,000 people living in the area.

The North West region is a productive agricultural area with summer dominant rainfall and a climate allowing for crop and pasture growth across most of the year.

There are significant groundwater resources, together with surface water allocations, to enable the irrigation industries to contribute approximately 48 per cent of the gross value of agricultural production to the region’s economy.

Our year in review

North West Local Land Services is working to deliver efficient and effective integrated services associated with agricultural production, biosecurity, natural resource management and emergency management, with great importance based upon a regional delivery focus.

2015 saw additional pest animal funding being provided under Commonwealth Drought Funding. This enabled the North West Invasive Species team to deliver additional wild dog and feral pig programs, a large and very important component of which was landholder training and education which included support to established groups, wild dog control associations and individuals for the control of wild dog and feral pigs.

There were 19 vertebrate pesticide induction training sessions conducted which educated more than 150 landholders on the legislative requirements of transporting, application, and safe storage of 1080 and Pindone products. In addition, five aerial shooting programs were undertaken across the region and included a cross-border program with Northern Tablelands Local Land Services and landholders across both regions. The five programs coordinated with landholder groups completed 98 total flying hours, destroying 2,600 feral pigs.

The North West Local Land Services native vegetation team conducted 13 native vegetation codes of practice information sessions engaging with more than 300 landholders across the region. Our Green Army project, which was conducted in partnership with Conservation Volunteers Australia, treated 350 hectares for harrisia cactus, which included 150 hectares of travelling stock reserves in the Goondiwindi area. A further 200 ha of private property was also treated.

Another key achievement during the year was the development and adoption of the North West Local Land Services Invasive Species Prioritisation and Implementation Framework. These strategic documents help inform annual investment programs and will underpin the development of the North West Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan. This program aims to maintain or improve the condition of native vegetation and biodiversity assets, which have been identified as threatened or endangered ecological communities and associated Regional Vegetation Communities within the North West Local Land Services regional boundary.
Bullawa Creek restoration project

The challenge
In February 2012, a substantial flood in Bullawa Creek, east of Narrabri caused wide-ranging bank erosion on several properties. Not only did it cause degradation to the creek but also affected the water quality downstream and a potential decrease in biodiversity and remnant native vegetation linkages.

Work undertaken
North West Local Land Services worked with landholders along the creek and engaged Soil Conservation Service to undertake major conservation works to repair and improve the geomorphology of creek.

The overall rehabilitation is to be completed in stages with the first stage and priority being completed. The second stage is to commence in 2016.

Benefits
• Bullawa Creek bank has been stabilised reducing the risk of further degradation.
• Native vegetation along the bank has protected and enhanced.
• Improved water quality downstream.
• Downstream native fish habitat protected from siltation.
• Wider aquatic environment protected from effects of eroded soil that may contain fertilisers and pesticides.
• Local trafficable road protected from potentially aggressive bank erosion.

Key achievement
Improved riparian health and protection of remnant native vegetation which is important for biodiversity and linkages.

Creek bank stabilised reducing risk of further degradation.

A great project for the community, the results of which will improve agricultural and environmental outcomes.

In collaboration with
• Local landholders
• Soil Conservation Service
• NSW Department of Primary Industries - Fisheries

“They’ve done a magnificent job as far as we’re concerned. Of course, we’ll really see the outcome with another big flow — but we’re ready.”

- Landholder, Ken Pierce
Innovative soil moisture monitoring

The challenge
Traditionally, growers have used rudimentary tools to make decisions about soil moisture levels—these have lacked precision. A new layer of science and technology has been adapted to accurately assess soil moisture monitoring.

Work undertaken
Following a partnership with CSIRO that involved examining the soil’s moisture-holding capabilities in the Liverpool Plains region, North West Local Land Services Agricultural Extension Team developed and implemented technology to adapt a tool that has been traditionally used to monitor salinity levels.

The benefits of the new technology has been delivered to the community via education workshops and a grower fact sheet.

Benefits
- Assists growers to better tailor crop inputs to available soil moisture.
- Increases grower confidence in crop selection decisions.
- Provides an accurate yield forecast.
- Enhances the understanding of soil types and moisture capacity across the property.

Key achievement
Science and technology have adapted a tool to allow growers access to a more sophisticated method of monitoring soil moisture.

In collaboration with
- University of New England and industry members

“A really innovative adaptation of an existing tool that greatly assists to assess soil moisture.”
- Landholder, soil moisture monitoring workshop
Northern Tablelands Local Land Services

The Northern Tablelands region spans 45,000 square kilometres and is bounded by Tenterfield in the north and Walcha in the south. The region extends between Warialda and Delungra in the west and reaches to the escarpment of the Great Dividing Range in the east.

The total population of the Northern Tablelands region is 72,000 centred around the towns of Armidale, Glen Innes, Guyra, Inverell, Tenterfield, Uralla, Walcha and numerous small villages, all of which support productive rural communities predominantly producing beef, sheep and wool. Major industries and town viability are focused around agricultural production.

There are eight Aboriginal nations - Ngarabal, Dainggatti, Anaiwan, Kamilaroi, Banbai, Gumbainggir, Bigambul and Nganyaywana - incorporating various language dialects, which fall within the region.

The region has the highest livestock carrying capacity of all regions of NSW and grazing is the major land use at 56% of the region. Significant smaller industries include forestry, apples and stone fruit, potatoes, glasshouse tomatoes, dairy farms, alpacas and cool climate wineries.

Our year in review

Northern Tablelands Local Land Services has worked towards supporting communities and providing customer-focused services that enable improved primary production and better management of natural resources. In the past year a number of workshops, seminars, programs and events were conducted that were designed to support landholders in making their enterprises more profitable, resilient and sustainable.

To further engage with the community and spread real-time messages with customers Northern Tablelands Local Land Services launched an app, which features links to local events, news and essential information.

During the 2015 wild dog aerial baiting program, Northern Tablelands Local Land Services coordinated the delivery of more than 105,000 aerial baits, and approximately 10,000 ground baits laid by local landholders from 21 local Wild Dog Control Associations. Baits were laid along 1,850 kilometres of bait lines on both private land and State Forests and another 776 kilometres of bait lines were flown in country managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

On travelling stock reserves in the Northern Tablelands region, 1,493 permits were issued in 2015 for moving stock. A further 51 apiary permits were issued across 808 sites and 288 long-term grazing permits were issued.

A major milestone for our organisation in 2015 was the development of a collaborative partnership model with Landcare. Northern Tablelands Local Land Services has allocated more than $1 million dollars for the operation of local Landcare networks and the delivery of Regional Landcare Facilitator functions for the three-year period from 2015 to 2018.
Livestock innovation forum

The challenge
Showcase technology and innovation relevant to Northern Tablelands livestock producers and also engage young farmers in the region. The forum was designed to inspire and equip traditional landholders with information and examples of the use of new technology and innovation currently available.

Work undertaken
The two-day forum included national and international presenters. Landholders currently using the technology were among the presenters, giving the audience first-hand insight into the practicalities and benefits of the technology on-farm. Researchers discussed new technology that could revolutionise livestock production in the future. More than 60 landholders attended.

Benefits
- High calibre speakers showcasing technology and innovation available to local livestock producers.
- Producers learning from other producers who have been early adopters of technology.
- Researchers were able to identify landholders who are interested in trialling new technology on-farm.
- Partnerships developed between Northern Tablelands Local Land Services, NSW Farmers Association, University of New England, NSW Department of Primary Industries, CSIRO and Sheep Cooperative Research Centre.
- Over 98 per cent of participants rated the event as excellent and positive feedback was overwhelming, resulting in the forum becoming a biannual event.

Key achievement
Local livestock producers and agribusiness professionals praised the Livestock Innovation Forum and particularly appreciated the combination of practical implementation with research.

In collaboration with
- NSW Farmers Association
- CSIRO
- NSW Department of Primary Industries
- Sheep Cooperative Research Centre
- University of New England researchers

“The Livestock Innovation Forum was one of the best events I have attended in 35 years. It was very engaging with relevant speakers that stimulated thoughts on what farming could look like in the future.”
- Chief Operations Officer, AD Commodities, Tony Keech
A competent team for emergency response

The challenge
To develop a competent Northern Tablelands Local Land Services team who are capable of assisting in an emergency response locally and outside the Northern Tablelands region. The team is required to work cooperatively and alongside emergency services, other government agencies and agricultural industries.

Work undertaken
During 2015, Northern Tablelands Local Land Services ran four training events. Trained staff from the region assisted in the Panama Disease and Bellinger River turtle emergency responses as well as the Hunter flood response. Staff also responded to local emergencies such as truck roll-overs and locust infestations. Tasks included assessment of animal welfare, coordination of volunteer surveillance teams and control and coordination of field activities including fodder drops and collection and disposal of deceased animals. Our team also conducted damage/impact assessments on the production capacity of those affected to determine their recovery needs.

Benefits
- In conjunction with NSW Department of Primary Industries Emergency Management Unit, 85 per cent of Northern Tablelands Local Land Services staff is trained at the base-level to respond to an emergency event.
- The impact of emergency events were minimised through the involvement and skill level of Northern Tablelands trained staff.
- Recovery and rehabilitation of affected areas was efficient and timely, minimising pressure on and costs to producers and investors.
- Northern Tablelands Local Land Services has a more competent, efficient and better trained workforce which translates into everyday tasks and activities. This improves the biosecurity of Northern Tablelands agricultural enterprises.

Key achievement
- Some 85 per cent of Northern Tablelands Local Land Services staff received biosecurity and emergency response training, many of whom responded to emergency events during 2015.
- Networks of ‘response-ready’ emergency staff are now established and can be called upon in the event of a local emergency.

In collaboration with
- NSW Department of Primary Industries
- QLD Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- NSW Office of Environment and Heritage
- Local government
- Police and State Emergency Services
- Vehicle Rescue Association

“The cost of freedom from exotic disease is eternal vigilance and preparedness. In the event that an exotic disease enters Australia a speedy and efficient response will save industry and government billions of dollars.”
- District Vet, Andrew Biddle
Riverina Local Land Services

The Riverina region is bounded by Harden in the east, Hay in the west, Hillston in the north and Lockhart in the south.

The area covers around 67,000 square kilometres of land and is serviced by 17 local councils, with more than 166,000 people. Wagga Wagga is the largest centre in the Riverina Local Land Services region, with a population of more than 62,000 people.

The Riverina region has a diverse agricultural sector, dominated by wheat, livestock and horticulture, with the gross value of agricultural production at $1.7 billion.

There is also considerable irrigation development along the Murrumbidgee and Lachlan Rivers associated with licences to pump water from the river or from bores. The mix of enterprises includes dryland cropping, pastures and irrigated crops such as lucerne, rice, cotton, cereals, maize, millet and sorghum.

Communities in the Riverina region see agricultural production as important to the country’s food security and work toward being resilient to climate variability and the changing economy.

Our year in review

Riverina Local Land Services is focused on delivering relevant and valued services to our customers.

Innovation continues to be an important part of how Riverina Local Land Services operates as evidenced by a leading-edge pest animal aerial survey in the Hay area, wild dog collaring and tracking project in the highlands area, Lucerne Online, and the use of pop-up shops to promote Riverina Local Land Services and provide service delivery where it is needed.

The NSW and Australian Governments invested $3 million to help manage and protect our natural resources through the provision of grant funding, building the capability of land managers and the provision of advisory services. In the past year funding was offered to support productive farms, natural landscapes and community grants, with more than 260 applications received for either grant funding or advisory services following the program launch at the 2015 Henty Field Days.

Rates funding continues to be used to undertake preventative measures for biosecurity risks including surveillance activities, providing livestock health and management advice, and providing proactive pest management advice.

Riverina Local Land Services works closely with producers and industry to ensure biosecurity risks are monitored and managed to minimise any impact on agriculture and international market access. During 2015 Riverina Local Land Services conducted 125 consultations and 892 visits to farms for livestock related disease investigations for lameness, including footrot, and met 40 of the 41 KPIs for the Animal Biosecurity Business Plan.

Riverina Local Land Services has engaged with land managers, stakeholders and investors to sustain agricultural production and to protect natural resource base assets. Key focuses of on-ground works and community grant support in 2015 have resulted in nearly 90 voluntary conservations agreements, more than 10,000 hectares protected and conserved for biodiversity enhancement and nearly 9,000 hectares improved to better manage sustainable grazing.
Traditional burning returns to the Riverina

The challenge
Riverina Local Land Services is responsible for the care and maintenance of more than 86,000 hectares of travelling stock reserves. Some reserves have significant environmental and cultural values which are impacted through weeds and biomass build-up. At times conventional management techniques do not work so adaptation is required.

Work undertaken
Riverina Local Land Services established a cultural burn team consisting of Wiradjuri community members from Wagga, Narrandera and Hay. The team of eight received Rural Fire Service Bushfire Management accreditation, attended a national bushfire conference, learnt cultural burning techniques from Aboriginal elders and have culturally burnt 25 hectares of native woodland on two travelling stock reserves. Methods will be refined and applied as an adaptive land management tool.

Benefits
• Greater sharing of traditional skills and knowledge in local communities.
• Strong partnerships through hands-on experience in bushfire management and cultural burning.
• Encourages natural regeneration, controls weeds without relying on chemicals and reduces bushfire hazard.
• Outstanding woodland response to cultural burning, especially in promoting seeding of native grasses.
• Diversifies Local Land Services land management techniques.
• Opportunity to monitor ecological response through trial plots and improve methods over time.

Key achievement
• Applying cultural burning as an adaptive land management tool has proven to be valuable for the health of the environment but also for the health of our local community.
• This program has forged strong bonds between land managers, Aboriginal communities and local Rural Fire Service brigades.

In collaboration with
• NSW Rural Fire Service
• Local Aboriginal community
• Local farming community

“This is the first time I have seen a cultural burn done in the Riverina. I feel so privileged to be here and so very positive about the future.”
- Wiradjuri-burn team member, Graham Traynor
Malleefowl recovery project

The challenge
Formerly widespread throughout mainland Australia, the malleefowl (Leipoa ocellata) is currently listed as endangered in NSW under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*. Fragmentation of habitat, through land clearing and predation by introduced pest animals such as foxes and feral cats, has seen the malleefowl retreat into the last viable remnants of the mallee and mulga woodlands.

Work undertaken
Donato Environmental Services developed a malleefowl management plan for the North Yalgogrin site. As a result, 12 motion-detector cameras were deployed at active and inactive mounds, water points and known malleefowl locations to assist with monitoring. Land managers attended fox baiting/1080 training with more than 10,000 hectares being covered as part of a fox baiting management plan. The National Malleefowl Recovery Team (NMRT) trained 12 land managers/volunteers how to monitor malleefowl mounds and upload data onto the NMRT data base. Community awareness articles have been published and landholder meetings are conducted quarterly.

Benefits
- 1080 training and fox baiting plans have assisted in malleefowl survival as well as reducing lamb deaths.
- Increased awareness of habitat protection and improvement in the local community and throughout the region.
- Working with land managers has opened opportunities for the recovery of the malleefowl through education/information sessions
- Collaboration with the National Malleefowl Recovery Team has been a beneficial partnership.

Key achievement
- Through community awareness programs, there has been increased land manager participation in the protection of the malleefowl.
- A fox baiting group has been formed and volunteers have been trained how to monitor mounds.

In collaboration with
- Land managers
- National Malleefowl Recovery Team
- Lake Cowal Foundation
- Bland Shire Council

“It’s great to see Riverina Local Land Service staff being so actively involved in the malleefowl recovery project; it would be such a shame if the malleefowl were to become extinct in the local area.”

- Land manager, Peter Wood
South East Local Land Services

The South East Local region covers 55,600 square kilometres from Stanwell Park in the north to the Victorian border in the south, and westward from Boorowa in the north to Thredbo in the south. The area covers 698 kilometres of coastline or 40 per cent of the NSW coast. The south east region is home to approximately 605,000 people including over 16,500 Indigenous Australians. The majority of people reside in regional centres along the coast, with Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama, Bomaderry, Nowra and Ulladulla being the largest. The tablelands regional centres include Goulburn, Yass, Queanbeyan and Cooma.

The current economic prosperity of the South East Local Land Services region is dependent upon natural resources which support a variety of highly diverse land uses including agriculture (sheep, beef, dairy and cropping and horticulture), aquaculture, water harvesting, commercial and recreational fishing, heavy industry, forestry, surface and underground mining, urban and lifestyle development and tourism and recreation. The value of region’s agriculture is approximately $644 million per annum.

Our year in review

South East Local Land Services has undertaken a range of on-ground work across all core business functions that have added value to regional landscapes and economies throughout the year.

In the past year we delivered the South East Strategic Plan, which prioritises service delivery on a regional basis. It reflects regional and local priorities and it seeks to build resilient communities in productive, healthy landscapes.

Four community advisory groups were established with 22 members appointed across the four groups from local communities within the south east region. These groups will play a pivotal role in how South East Local Land Services can work more effectively. In the future these groups will provide input into the delivery of four local plans that reflect the local needs and expectations of our customers and stakeholders.

To support primary producers impacted by wild dogs, we completed a review and began implementing the South East Wild Dog Policy. In the past year 235 properties were involved in wild dog spring baiting and more than 1,700,000 hectares of pest animal control measures were carried out.

Significant effort was also made towards the establishment of a South East Regional Weeds Committee in response to the Natural Resources Commission’s 2014 Review of Weed Management in NSW.
Small farms network

The challenge
Small landholders as a collective clientèle are challenging to engage due to their diverse rural lifestyles, off-farm employment, transient/absent nature and social disconnect with traditional community networks. The Small Farms Network, established in 2004, captures this rapidly expanding landholder demographic, functioning as a regional hub for workshops, natural resource management funding and the delivery of a whole of farm sustainable land management.

Work undertaken
The network has 622 members across the Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Southern Highlands districts. Twelve workshops were delivered on a variety of integrated land management topics, building the capacity and skills of more than 350 landholders annually. It currently maintains communication with small landholders and the wider community through a regular e-newsletter.

Benefits
• A free social resource network for small landholders to access information on a wide range of land management issues not readily available through existing programs.
• The establishment of industry sub-networks provides small landholders the opportunity to enter the learning spectrum at different levels depending on their interests and ability.
• Delivery of a wide range of workshops which act as engagement hooks for landholders.
• Regular distribution of an e-newsletter which is a main information source for local events for small landholders.
• Whole of farm approach to land management.

Key achievement
• During 2015, the network supported the establishment of the Shoalhaven Beekeepers Association and Capital Region Small Farms Network.
• Milton Rocks project funded for three years.
• The Small Farms Network was awarded the 2015 NSW Blue Star Sustainability Community Environmental Achievement Award and 2015 NSW Australian Government Landcare Facilitator Award.

In collaboration with
• NSW Department of Primary Industries
• Southern Councils Group

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Managing coastal wetlands

The challenge
To improve and protect coastal wetlands (including salt marsh, mangroves, riparian areas, coastal floodplains, swamps, lakes and estuarine areas) and facilitate the storage of blue carbon within those wetlands on private and public land – from Stanwell Park in the north to the Victorian border in the south.

Work undertaken
Establishment and facilitation of a community of practice to undertake project works and share information and knowledge about wetland management. On-ground works to remediate key issues impacting south coast wetlands including:
- fencing to protect sensitive salt-marsh ecosystems
- invasive animal and plant species control, including fox and rabbit control and weeds of significance
- erosion control along streambanks
- revegetation to reconnect wetland and floodplain vegetation.

Benefits
- Improved wetland health and control of invasive plant and animal species in priority areas.
- Engagement and employment of Local Aboriginal Land Council work crews.
- Retention of blue carbon within wetlands.
- Education and training initiatives for private and public land managers.
- Large scale revegetation of wetland vegetation.

Key achievement
- More than 800 hectares of weed control across priority wetland sites and endangered ecological communities.
- Controlled 583 invasive animals.
- Protected 500 hectares of endangered shorebird breeding sites.
- Four kilometres of fencing protects 44 hectares of wetland.
- Conducted 17 education and awareness events reaching more than 300 people.
- More than 200 people participated in the South East Wetland Carers Network.
- Engaged 250 volunteers and 50 private land managers in on-ground works.

In collaboration with
- Public and private land managers
- Conservation Volunteers Australia
- Wetland Care Australia
- Local Aboriginal Land Councils
Western Local Land Services

The Western region is vast, covering 40 per cent of the state, however only has a population of 45,000 and approximately 13 per cent of these are Aboriginal.

The majority of the population resides in Broken Hill, followed by Cobar, Balranald, Bourke, Hillston, Brewarrina and Wentworth.

The region is renowned as one of the most diverse rangeland areas in Australia, which has been shaped by highly variable and unpredictable climatic conditions. Periods of drought are common and expected to increase in the future, based on climate change predictions.

While the soil and climate is largely unsuitable for intensive farming, the region still supports a wide range of other agricultural industries.

Sheep, cattle and goat grazing is common throughout, while cotton, horticulture, viticulture and cereal production occur in southern parts.

Carbon farming has emerged in recent years, with carbon projects increasing in number and type in north-eastern areas.

Our year in review

Western Local Land Services is supporting customers in the western region through the continued development and delivery of programs to meet the needs of the unique rangeland landscape.

Major achievements in 2015 included the consultation and preparation for final approval of the Western Local Strategic Plan along with the establishment of three local community advisory groups and three Aboriginal community advisory groups.

Biosecurity continued to be a major focus in 2015 and local officers worked collaboratively with veterinarians from the Department of Primary Industries on a range of activities with more than 11,000 sheep tested for brucellosis.

We partnered with local pest groups and NSW Farmers to expand our wild dog baiting program across the region and continued to trial our innovative 1080 meat bait program which targets feral pigs. Both programs are funded through the Australian Government’s Drought Recovery Program and resulted in the distribution of baits over more than 19 million hectares of land.

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

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

The challenge
Carbon farming is an industry that has developed rapidly in recent years and has opportunities for many landholders in the western region. There was a need for up-to-date and regionally relevant information to help landholders make informed decisions about whether to become involved.

Work undertaken
Western Local Land Services hosted a two-day Rangelands Carbon Conference in October 2015 to provide the latest facts and figures about Australia’s emerging carbon economy. More than 160 people attended the forum to hear from a wide range of experts about topics such as, the Emissions Reduction Fund, the science of carbon sequestration and emissions reduction, land sector activities and projects, policy and program implications of the carbon economy, rangelands climate change and adaptation and practical workshops on project development and participation in the carbon economy.

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

Key achievement
- The Rangelands Carbon Conference provided a source of impartial information for the benefit of landholders, financial and industry advisers and community members.

In collaboration with
- Australian Government

“The carbon farming industry is continually evolving and information becomes out of date very quickly.”
- Western region Landholder, John Gavin
Strategic approach to weed management

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

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

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

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

In collaboration with
- University of Sydney

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