

MURRAY LOCAL COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP (LCAG)

A committee of the Murray Local Land Services Board.

Report to the Murray LLS Board for the period January – March 2016

LCAG members

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

MEETING 18 March 2016

The Murray LCAG held their fifth meeting on the 18 March 2016 at Moama.

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

MLLS Staff: Chris Cumming, Andrew Cooper, Geoff Corboy, Gary Rodda.

Regional Landcare Facilitator: Edwina Hayes

2015 Year in review

The LCAG reviewed the first year of operation to inform planning for 2016. Summary points:

- Over 2015 meeting processes were introduced and/or improved including process around advice to the board, issues resolution, member's reports and turning actions into agenda items.
- In 2015 it became apparent that LCAG members were interested in providing a broader range of input and advice than was anticipated in the Terms of Reference.
- 2015 meetings had to allocate time for familiarising the LCAG on Murray LLS business to support good feedback from the LCAG. The LCAG chose the areas they wanted more information on to support their decisions. Year 2 should see a greater focus on LCAG advice to board and input into Murray LLS business.

Murray LCAG clearly demonstrated its ability to influence Murray LLS business areas of note include:

- Recommending better communications about what Murray LLS do. This led to:
 - Increased media releases.
 - Improved coverage with radio interviews.
 - The introduction of a Production Advice newsletter.
 - The formation of a communications working group.

- Recommending a need for further work on an Integrated Service Delivery Model – this is being progressed
- Assisting with Murray LLS processes:
 - Colin Bull assisted with small grants assessments.
 - Malcolm Holm assisted with staff recruitment.
 - Allan Curtis developed a close-the-loop model for actions arising.
- Providing feedback to inform planning in Agriculture, weeds, biosecurity and communities programs
- Providing feedback on emerging issues resulting in LLS response
- Providing feedback on community perceptions and satisfaction for incorporation in to planning.

2016 meeting schedule

The 2016 meeting schedule was set:

- Friday 19 March
- Wednesday 25 May
- Wednesday 17 August
- Wednesday 9 November

The Terms of Reference require updating and will be developed in the first half of 2016 to provide to the board for endorsement. There may be a requirement for an additional meeting to discuss. LCAG members expressed an interest to have a meeting that could link in with a board tour, potentially in August.

Murray LLS Biosecurity – Pest Plant and Animal Programs

Geoff Corboy presented an overview of Murray LLS's role in Biosecurity. The group was engaged to discuss MLLS' capacity and commitments, and engagement and consultative structures and provide recommendation on improvements.

The key points emphasised were:

- The Biosecurity team focusses resources primarily based on legislative requirement and biosecurity risk.
- Not a lot of areas that LCAG can influence.
- Feedback to LCAG on availability of biosecurity staff for general extension – because of regulatory requirements, the model is much more 1:1 with landholders (opposite to Ag extension staff) however biosecurity team could do with more updates on groups out there interested in biosecurity.

The LCAG overall agreed with the prioritisation processes Murray LLS was applying, however LCAG:

- Suggested MLLS need groups more engaged – keep improving messaging.
- Suggested review of delivery models for programs: Suggested that coordination of pest control activity is an area that groups could help support. Funding possibly to landcare groups - roles would be engagement, extension coordination of pick-up etc. Consider opportunities small grants may present to fund this group coordination or other pest or weed activities.
- Suggested community concern regarding disparity between biosecurity staff resources in the west and east.

Integrated Service Delivery

Chris Cumming presented on the current plans LLS have in place to improve integration across LLS functional areas, noting that LLS is not intending to change existing organisational structure at this stage.

MLLS looking to coordinate delivery at sub-regional scale, initially considering 6 monthly cross-team planning catch-ups. MLLS can see value in extending attendance at those meetings to the landcare and producer group community and other stakeholders to:

- Identify, consider and address local needs
- Consider opportunities for co delivery and or devolution of activity to groups
- Consider partnering opportunities
- Familiarise all staff working in an area of key contacts and interest points in groups and with stakeholders
- Support good and considered timing of scheduled events

There was discussion whether existing regional scale process (such as Murray Landcare regional meetings or landcare coordinator catch-ups) served this purpose already but general discussion on this brought up points such as:

- Murray Landcare meetings do not currently engage all groups in the region; in the main the key networks attend meetings.
- Regional scale meetings will not address planning, coordination and need issues at the sub-regional scale with the key technical and operational staff present to the extent that LLS is trying to achieve through this process.
- Murray Landcare regional meetings are a useful forum to have key regional staff attend
- Sub regional meetings would support Landcare coordinators and smaller groups to participate in planning events and projects and exploring partnership opportunities
- It was noted that those LCAG members present were not convinced of the benefit to their particular groups of being involved but acknowledged they were representative of the key capacity groups in the region so they were already well networked into LLS. These members felt that LLS could offer the opportunity to groups and landcare coordinators to be involved in this process and individual groups would determine interest.

Engagement of LCAG members between meetings

The board had invited the LCAG Chair to attend one Board meeting per annum. This was supported.

LCAG members initiated a process for input to LLS between meetings on an optional basis. Those interested are in the process of providing Murray LLS with an indication of which portfolio areas they would be interested in. LCAG members will also provide information on any additional representative roles/committees and will update LCAG members on areas of note.

LCAG Members Reports

Written members reports were received from approximately half the LCAG members. The members report offers LCAG members a chance to air key concerns, common issues and emerging trends so that they might be addressed at LCAG meetings. The reports weren't received in a timely enough manner to influence the agenda of this meeting however there is a commitment from LCAG members to pursue this form of reporting. The reports for March highlighted the following issues, concerns and trends:

- Council amalgamations.

- Local Landcare Coordinator recruitment.
- Small grants funding timelines - want 12 months to deliver projects rather than 6 months.
- Blue-green algae
- Electronic stock identification in NSW.

Local Landcare Coordinators initiative (LLCI)

Recruitment has finalised for LLC's in the Murray region. Host groups are excited at the prospect of improving their own capacity and that of groups across the region. Specific Local Landcare coordinators and host groups are:

- Paula Sheehan – Holbrook Landcare Network and Petaurus (shared role)
- Jeanette Crew – Yarkuwa
- Judy Kirk – Corowa District Landcare
- Erika Heffer – Ricegrowers Association of Australia
- Roger Knight – Western Murray Land Improvement Group

Hosts and coordinators attended a Local Landcare Coordinator Induction forum held in Newcastle on the 21-23rd March. Chris and Andrew represented Murray LLS.

Landcare NSW update

Kate Andrews (LLS state landcare position) attended their last meeting to talk about the NSW Landcare and LLS governance framework for the Local Landcare Coordinator initiative. They have submitted a research application to the Environmental Trust for Allan Curtis to conduct social monitoring of the LLCI.

Recommendation/Comment/ Advice

TOPIC: Terms of Reference - Quorum

Noted Terms of ref don't mention quorum. Only 7 members present – 8 missing. We will do recommendations no decisions

ACTION: Add topics of: needs for quorum, size of LCAG and minimum attendance standards into the review terms of reference.

TOPIC: second board member rotating through LCAG

RECOMMENDATION: agreed for other board members to come on a rotational basis. Terry acknowledged he could understand if concern if too much LLS but LCAG comfortable will manage that.

TOPIC: General discussion came up on recent events. Noted drought meetings were arranged quickly in response to LACG recommendations.

COMMENT: Comment on one session - content could be improved to reflect local needs with greater consultation with community group reps. Information, speakers etc. could have been better.

ACTION: Remind staff when LLS is arranging an event – will be improved with good collaborative process with groups connected to the ground who know needs and level of info required. Make sure speakers well briefed.

ACTION: Board communique – should go out with minutes to LCAG and be approved by LCAG before it goes to the board.

TOPIC: LCAG have had info sessions from LLS staff on different areas of responsibility.

Comment: Clarity of role was good for LCAG but would extend value if we ran sessions in sub-regional areas so the broader community was aware.

TOPIC: Communications – Update on our recent communication activities and improvements eg. radio, media, e updates –

COMMENT: LCAG acknowledge the good work done so far.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Push it harder in newspapers and media
- Consider regular articles
- Think about how engage in remote areas

Biosecurity Presentation: Comments

Discussed issue of relatively low uptake of fox baiting (around 20% of land managers)

- Low cost baiting good
- Need groups more engaged – keep improving messaging
- Key restrictor is coordination – more actively engage with groups – timing, role etc
- Coordination funding possibly to landcare groups. (in the whole pest and weed space)
- Consider opportunities small grants may present to fund coordination or other pest or weed activities
- Concern re staff resources in east – in biosecurity. Partly re turnover for staff but also would like one more position
- Feed back – to LCAG on availability of biosecurity staff for general extension – because of regulatory requirement much more 1:1 with landholders (opposite to Ag staff) however biosecurity team could do with more update on groups out there

Biosecurity legislation input

LCAG not really interested in further presentations on biosecurity legislation. Suggest LLS bring to LCAG key points that they may be interested in providing comment on

ACTION: Andrew send Geoff's power point around

Local Land Services sub regional coordination to improve integrated service delivery

LCAG members agreed this would address some of the integration issues they have raised

Those groups present not sure if they would wish to be involved in those meetings as already familiar and linked in with key staff in LLS for planning and delivery

Can see there may be benefit for smaller groups not so linked in.

Suggest as LLS progress idea can invite groups and they will determine the level of engagement they wish.