

Low Stress Stockhandling workshop

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A mix of 21 locals ranging from an 11-year-old child to livestock contractors, station hands and managers recently came along to a 2-day Low Stress Stockhandling workshop. The workshop was organised by Peita Scott from Toronga Pastoral Company at Hay. Part funding for the workshop was supplied by NSW Department of Primary Industries, Riverina Local Land Services and Murray Mallee Sustainable Farming, with Coolong Pastoral Company at Toronga Station providing the venue and the stock. With experienced trainer Jim Lindsay from Hughenden in Queensland leading the way, the group worked both sheep and cattle in a low-stress environment in the yards, without noise or hurrying.

'Animals read your body language, so we need to be very mindful in the way that we move around them', Jim Lindsay says. 'You need to pay attention to their flight zone and break that down without frightening them; in addition we must be conscious of the leaders and the herd mentality at all times. Once we can understand when and how to apply pressure to animals we can quietly move stock to their destination.'

At the end of the workshop, everyone agreed that they had learned to move stock efficiently while placing less stress on the animals. They also agreed that these new techniques created a safer work environment in both the yards and the paddock and had the potential to increase overall stock productivity. Everyone at the workshop received a certificate of participation from Low Stress Stockhandling Pty Ltd. For further details about these workshops see their website at: www.lss.net.au.



Low Stress Stockhandling Trainer Jim Lindsay coaching workshop participants as they move shorn ewes through a deliberately half-shut gate being blocked by the trainer and by a coat on the gatepost.
Photo by Sally Ware

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2015 Peppin-Shaw Ewe Flock Forum!

By Sally Ware
Riverina Local Land Services,
Hay, and Committee member

The Peppin-Shaw Riverina Ewe Flock Competition—one of our premier national ewe flock competitions—started in 1987 and has been held every year since, with the exception of 4 years of severe drought (1995, 2003, 2005, 2009) and 2 years when it was rained out (1988 and 2011). In 2015 the Peppin-Shaw is changing to a biannual open forum. This new district event will focus on the production and profitability of the Hay Merino breeders' ewe flocks, and it will showcase not only wool quality but also meat value and surplus sheep sales.

Committee President David Rankin says that our Merinos have changed since 1987, and the Peppin-Shaw also needs to change:

'Our members wanted to take the emphasis off the competition and place greater importance on learning and discussion in the sheep yards. We will still have "assessors" in the yards to discuss the meat and wool characteristics of the Merino ewes on display, but there will be no actual judging. The aim of the original competition, "to further the quality of the district's Merino flocks", is retained, but we are now looking at the total production of our Merinos. Industry guest speakers will be involved in discussions in the sheep yard and on the buses each day. The forum will provide a great learning experience for all, especially the younger generation.

'We are also moving the date from the usually very hot second Tuesday and Wednesday of February to the first Tuesday and Wednesday of March. Young breeding ewes will be on display along with the rams that they will normally be joined to.

In addition the owners will have the option of yarding other Merinos, including sale ewes and wethers, and this will add to the ongoing forum in the sheep yard.

'We also wish to thank our dedicated long-term sponsors, particularly our major sponsor Riverina Wool, along with Zoetis Animal Health, Riverina Wool Testers, Ian Lilburne Classing, Elanco Animal Health, Bayer, Westpac, Jock Dunn, Elders, Rodwells and Landmark and the Merino studs of 'Hazeldean', 'Wanganella', 'Alma', 'Pooginook', 'Woodpark' Poll, 'Caroonboon' and 'Tom's Lake'. The prizes provided by these sponsors will now be used to run the forum along with generous handouts at a windup drinks and finger food evening.'

With Gab Hurst on board as the new Secretary, the Committee is busy preparing for the first forum, which will be held on 3 and 4 March. A website has been developed to promote the forum, the Hay Merino breeders and the district. It will provide direct on-line registration and promotion of sponsors: go to www.peppinshaw.com.au

Hay Merino breeders and sponsors who are interested in coming along to the inaugural 2015 forum are asked to contact Gab on email: peppinshaw@gmail.com or mobile 0409 670 707. See details on the back page.



No longer a competition, the Peppin-Shaw is now an open forum focusing on Merino production and profitability. This year it will be held on 3 and 4 March 2015. *Photo of the 2013 Competition at the Tupra sheep yards by Margie McClelland*



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- NSW Rural Assistance Authority
- NSW Department of Primary Industries

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The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (October 2014). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services or the user's independent adviser.

Legal Roads Network Project

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Landholders affected by shire roads in the Cobar and Bourke Shires should have recently received correspondence about the replacement of the old Western Division Roads (WDRs) system with the new Legal Roads Network. The WDR system was initiated in the 1960s and was never completed across the Western Division. The identification process used in those days was not as technically advanced as the process available to the Legal Roads Project. As a result, the areas that were defined and withdrawn from leases back then for use as roads were not as accurate as can be defined now by using modern technology. To make sure that only the minimum lands are withdrawn from affected leases for roads, please sign and return the 'Form of Agreement' in the correspondence you receive so that lands that are currently shire roads can be accurately defined within your property.

The Legal Roads Network team has now drawn up 59 plans identifying 12,500 km of shire roads and 2500 km of restricted easements to landlocked properties in the Western Division.

The project has finished capture of the roads and easements in the Unincorporated Area and the Central Darling, Bourke and Cobar shires. We're now working in Wentworth Shire, where plans representing 30% of Wentworth Shire roads are being prepared. We are currently working on Old Broken Hill Rd, Nob Rd, Roo Roo Rd, Milkengay Rd, Haul Rd and Popio Rd.

Landholders whose primary access is via these roads should have received paperwork outlining what they need

to do to make sure legal access is provided. If you haven't returned your paperwork, make sure you do so as soon as possible so that your requirements for access are addressed.

It is important to remember that NSW Trade and Investment now requires legal access by way of direct access to the shire road system or access by restricted easement to be in place before any consent to transfer is granted. To maximise this opportunity, landlocked Western Lands Lease property holders should give careful thought to their preferred primary access location.

When you are responding to our request to identify your primary access, please note that you can nominate only existing tracks. Only one legal access will be provided per property, unless the Commissioner agrees that more than one is justified. So if the primary access to your property is via another shire road, then before nominating your primary access please wait until that road is being investigated by the Project.

The Project Team can't stress enough the importance of easement applications being returned promptly to make sure that easements are created to landlocked properties. It will not be possible for the Project to revisit these areas, and any creation of legal access in the future will be at the landholder's expense.

The Team looks forward to your continued support and the timely return of paperwork so that an effective legal access system can be achieved in the Western Division.



Rural Assistance Authority

What do we do?

We provide a wide range of proactive and flexible assistance measures to the rural sector that encourage self-reliance and adaptation to change.

■ Farm Innovation Fund

Low interest loans up to \$250,000 to improve permanent farm infrastructure, ensuring long-term productivity and sustainable land use.

■ Farm Finance Concessional Loans

An Australian Government initiative to help eligible farm businesses that are struggling with high levels of debt.

■ Drought Concessional Loans

An Australian Government initiative to provide concessional loans to eligible drought-affected farm businesses for debt restructuring, operating expenses and drought recovery activities.

■ Natural Disaster Relief

Low interest loans up to \$130,000 to help farmers and small businesses recover after declared natural disaster events.

■ Transport Assistance

A rebate of up to 50% of the cost of transporting fodder to a property, or stock to/from agistment and to sale or slaughter, following a declared natural disaster event.

■ Flying Fox Netting Subsidy

A 50% subsidy, up to a maximum of \$20,000, for commercial orchardists in NSW to help install both throw-over netting and fully secured netting where there is potential for damage to crops from significant numbers of flying-foxes.

■ Farm Debt Mediation

A structured negotiation process to help farmers and creditors reach agreement on future financial relations between them.

Should you have any queries about getting help, please do not hesitate to contact the NSW Rural Assistance Authority on 02 6391 3000 or toll free on 1800 678 593.

Information on assistance schemes should be read in conjunction with the information brochures and application forms, which provide the complete eligibility criteria.

CONTACT US

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Improved management of Bottle Bend Reserve

By Ian Kelly
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Bottle Bend Reserve is a Crown Reserve located about 20 kilometres east of Gol Gol in far south-western NSW. It includes significant areas of native vegetation, cultural heritage and frontage along the River Murray. Up until 2010 the Reserve was managed as a State Forest, and it had many environmental issues and challenges that the Land Administration Ministerial Corporation, which was the Trust Manager, needed to resolve. Issues such as acid sulfate soils, vegetation dieback, unauthorised camping, weed and feral animal infestations, and fire hazard risks were immediately identified by the Trust.

The Reserve covers an area of almost 1620 hectares and is used for public recreation, nature conservation and rural services. Partnerships have been established with Western Local Land Services (formerly the Lower Murray-Darling Catchment Management Authority), Gol Gol Primary School, the Office of Environment and Heritage, the NSW Office of Water and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to work on a number of initiatives within the Reserve.

Jointly funded projects have enabled areas containing important cultural heritage sites and aboriginal cultural values to be protected and the numerous tracks within the Reserve rationalised. This has helped to regenerate black box trees and lignum shrubs.

Over the last 4 years the Trust has added firebreaks and run weed spraying and extensive rabbit-control programs, as well as school and other educational programs in cooperation with the local Gol Gol Primary School. A management plan has recently been finalised.

Bottle Bend Reserve is a popular site for locals and visitors to the area. With the re-establishment of the designated camping area, numerous travellers and tourists are enjoying overnight stays right on the Murray River. Restrictions have been placed on the use of other areas so that the fragile soils and cultural heritage values can be protected.

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority and the NSW Office of Water are continuing with scientific research into acid sulfate soil issues. So far, over 400 hectares of black box woodland at the Reserve has been watered twice to rehabilitate flood plain vegetation and enhance the wildlife habitat. The latest watering — a joint project with the Office of Environment and Heritage — will be completed by October 2014 and is the most important flooding event in 20 years. One potential result of the restored habitat is an increase in wildlife numbers. This should increase the number of visitors to surrounding townships such as Mildura and Gol Gol, as well as to the Reserve's designated camping area.



From top: Photos of Gol Gol Primary School and the Bottle Bend Reserve sign. *Photos courtesy Crown Lands Division, NSW Trade & Investment.* **Right:** Aerial photo of the watered area in Bottle Bend Reserve. *Photo courtesy Crown Lands Division, NSW Trade & Investment.*



Ram Select workshop at 'Blue Gate' stud, Moulamein

**By Genevieve Reardon
Murray Senior Local Land
Services Officer – Livestock
Albury**

Over 20 local landholders converged at 'Blue Gate' Merino stud near Moulamein on 29 August to learn more about ram selection, Australian sheep breeding values (ASBVs) and genomics.

A mix of practical sessions and theory proved effective as participants began the day with a hands-on session that demonstrated how difficult—or impossible—it can be to accurately determine some traits, such as EMD (eye muscle depth), visually. Although you may be able to feel the difference in muscularity between animals, how do you know if the less visually attractive ram, which was actually a triplet out of a maiden ewe and raised during a drought period, has the better genes to pass on to his progeny?

Physical fitness will always be important and the traits you select for will depend on what you are trying to achieve in your own enterprise—be it wool, prime lambs, store lambs or surplus sheep. But given that 70% of a sheep's appearance is influenced by traits other than genetics, visual assessment is a less reliable indicator of what a ram is actually going to produce. Factors affecting a young ram's visual appearance include its date of birth, whether or not it was a multiple birth, the age of the dam, and feed and health issues.

Workshop participants were guided through how to use visual assessment and ASBVs to select the rams that best suited their enterprises and future goals. One key message from the day was: When selecting your rams, focus on three or four main traits instead



Landholders at in a Ram Select workshop at 'Blue Gate' near Moulamein. *Photo by Genevieve Reardon*

of every possible desirable trait. Being aware of trait correlation is also important. Selection for one trait will always affect another; some of these effects will be positive, and others negative. For example, selecting for staple length will increase fleece weight but will also increase fibre diameter. Selecting for yearling fat depth will increase intramuscular fat but can decrease fleece weight.

Nevertheless, these correlations can be managed, and there is a lot of scope to minimise antagonistic correlations with careful index selection. In addition, regardless of how good the ASBVs are, they are useless without good sheep experience: common sense and ASBVs really do make a great combination.

The workshop was one of several Ram Select workshops funded by the Sheep CRC and run by the Central Murray Bestwool/Bestlamb group. The Central Murray Bestwool/Bestlamb

group is supported by the Western Murray Land Improvement Group through Murray Local Land Services funding. This group also runs other sheep production workshops and information sessions, including the increasingly popular Lifetime Ewe Management course.

It was a credit to the event organiser, Rick Ellis (Central Murray Bestwool/Bestlamb coordinator), that the day ran very smoothly, with great feedback received from participants, despite the fact that Rick was unexpectedly unable to make it on the day.

Nicotiana glauca toxicity in cattle

By Tahleah Haddow
Veterinary Student, Charles
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and

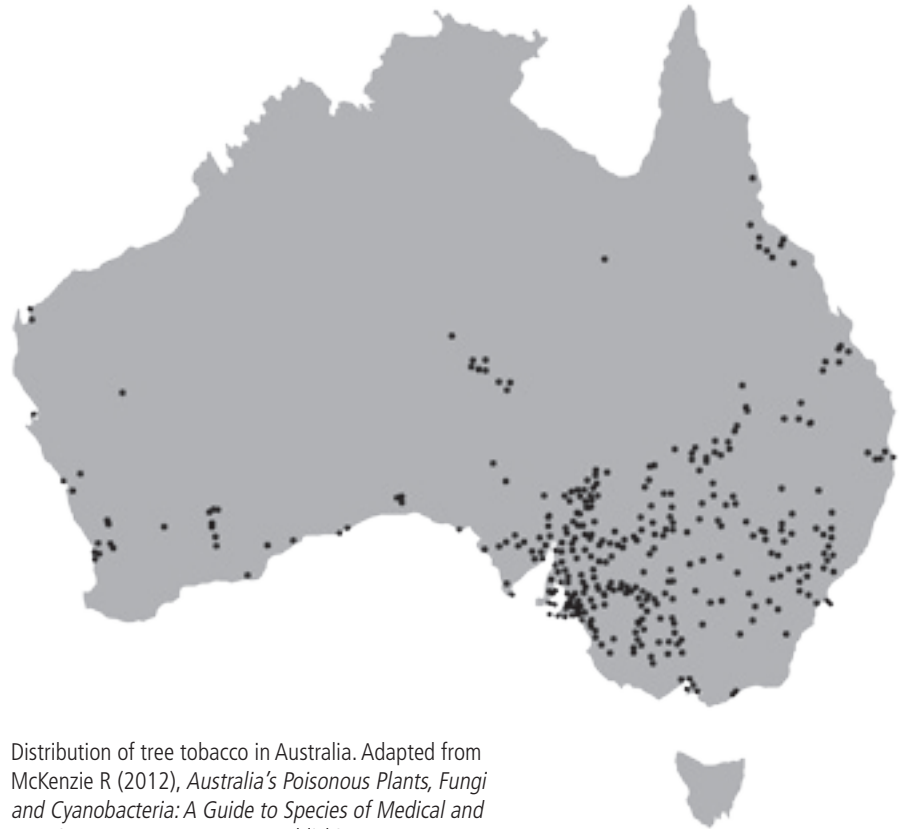
Dermot McNerney
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Nicotiana glauca (tree tobacco) is an upright, small, spindly tree with broad, elliptical, bluish-green leaves and pale yellow, tubular flowers. It was introduced from Argentina and is regarded as an environmental weed throughout all of mainland Australia.

Tree tobacco grows in a wide variety of habitats. It is considered a problem in the drier, inland regions of southern Australia and is well distributed throughout western NSW. Interestingly, it is most prevalent in areas where the soil has been disturbed in some way.

Nicotiana glauca belongs to the plant family Solanaceae and contains pyridine alkaloid toxins, the main ones being anabasine and nicotine. If the plant is eaten it can cause death, and it can also cause embryo malformation. Cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, ostriches, rabbits and humans are recorded as having been affected.

In January 2013, a property in the far Western Division was visited by a DPI vet after the producer had reported death and illness in some cattle. The producer had a group of four Angus yearling heifers, three of which had been found dead in or near a creek off the Darling River. The three heifers had been dead for many days, so necropsies were not done. The fourth animal was lying down and made a few unsuccessful attempts to rise. The appearance of the ground around her indicated that she had been struggling to rise for some



Distribution of tree tobacco in Australia. Adapted from McKenzie R (2012), *Australia's Poisonous Plants, Fungi and Cyanobacteria: A Guide to Species of Medical and Veterinary Importance*, CSIRO Publishing.

time. She was alert and responsive, and her temperature and breathing were normal. Other than her inability to get up and some mild dehydration, there was nothing abnormal. Daytime temperatures were in the high thirties and there was a lack of green feed, except for clusters of what was later found to be tree tobacco growing among the stones in the creek.

Blood samples were collected from the surviving heifer and sent off to be analysed. The abnormalities in the main blood tests were mild and revealed dehydration and liver and muscle damage.

Close to the heifers there was a very small cluster of identical plants on the bank of the creek. They were at various stages of growth and had large green leaves. Almost all of the plants showed evidence of being eaten, with broken branches and leaves stripped. The owner was advised to destroy the plants.

The surviving heifer was given electrolyte and glucose infusions, and the producer was advised to give

her plenty of water and hay and roll her on to alternate sides each day to minimise muscle damage.

The plants suspected of causing the deaths and illness looked similar *Solanum mauritanum* (wild tobacco), but wild tobacco is found mainly along the coast. Plant experts finally suggested that the plants were more likely tree tobacco.

The sick heifer finally got up on her feet on day 10, looking fine.

The effects of the alkaloids in tree tobacco depend on how much is eaten and how stressed the animal is. Neurological signs can be missed, as they occur soon after the plant is eaten. The animal initially shows weakness, tremors, and staggering, but if the dose is lethal the animal will later develop depression, paralysis, coma and then death. The heifer that survived had probably eaten a non-lethal dose.

Although tests for the anabasine alkaloid present in the plant were not done in this case, the animal's urine,



The plants identified near the dead cattle. Photos courtesy NSW Department of Primary Industries

stomach contents or other tissue can be tested. Samples of suspect (preferably flowering) plants can also be sent to the National Herbarium of NSW in Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens for identification.

Tree tobacco is unpalatable under normal conditions and is seldom eaten. Even though it is widespread, few

cases of poisoning have been recorded. If there is a shortage of feed, such as in drought or during holding or transport, stock have been known to consume the plant and die rapidly.

If there is sudden death or nervous system depression in stock, tree tobacco should be among the suspected culprits, especially where soil

has been disturbed. Take care when droving or holding stock: remove the plant from holding yards and holding paddocks and make sure the animals have adequate feed available.

Thanks to Dr Ross McKenzie and David Mallinson for their help with the information in this article.

Update from Western Local Land Services

Grants program now open

Landholders across the Western Local Land Services Region are encouraged to apply for the first round of Western Local Land Services grants funding. The focus of this funding will be on:

- total grazing-pressure management through fencing
- riparian management: fencing to better manage river frontage
- rangeland rehabilitation: construction of ponding banks and water-spreading systems, and erosion control
- sustainable farming programs.

Landholders across the Western Local Land Services Region will be eligible to apply, although programs may target certain areas, depending on the funding source. All projects will be based on a cost-sharing arrangement

between the landholder and Western Local Land Services.

Expressions of interest will open in October. Once the expressions of interest have been checked for eligibility, a case officer will be assigned to help each applicant develop a full application. All applications will be assessed and ranked by an independent panel.

For more information, talk to the staff at your local Western Local Land Services office or visit www.western.lls.nsw.gov.au.

Native vegetation tools

With changes to the Native Vegetation Regulations under way, the Office of Environment and Heritage has created a series of online tools to make it quicker and easier to access information.

There are four tools online that focus on helping landholders to work out whether the *Native Vegetation Act 2003* applies to their circumstances and also to determine what clearing they can do without approval.

The release of the Information Tools has followed substantial consultation and user testing with a wide range of stakeholders. The tools are designed to guide the user through complex decision paths via simple questions and answers. The four decision-support tools are:

1. Does the *Native Vegetation Act* apply? This will help to determine whether the land to be cleared is excluded from the operation of the Act.
2. What is the category of my vegetation? This will help to determine whether the vegetation is classified as remnant

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vegetation, protected regrowth or non-protected regrowth.

3. What clearing can I do without approval? This will help to determine whether the clearing is listed as permitted clearing, excluded clearing, or a permitted activity, and therefore whether it can be done without approval.
4. What Routine Agricultural Management Activities (RAMAs) are available? This will help to determine what RAMAs are available in these circumstances on this land.

The tools work by using spatial viewers, which enable landholders to identify parts of their land where they are considering vegetation management and to then view only the rules that relate to those areas.

Privacy is assured, and no information fed into the tools is retained. The Information Tools are available at: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/vegetation/onlinetools.htm. Further tools are planned as part of OEH's commitment to meeting stakeholder needs.

Landcare Forum well received

Although rain prevented some people from coming along to this year's Western Landcare Forum, it raised the spirits of the 85 people present. The forum was held in White Cliffs on 15 and 16 August.

The Barrier Area Rangelcare Group and Western Landcare NSW hosted the event, which was partnered by the DPI Rural Support Program and Western Local Land Services. Forum organiser Louise Turner said that the topics and content from the speakers were relevant and well presented and created a lot of discussion from the audience.

'There was information about everything from pest management and stock health to funding enterprise change through crowd funding', Ms Turner said.



From top: Penne Clarke enjoying a massage by Donna-Lee Wynen at the Landcare Forum; Julie Petty, Trudie Atkinson and Gemma Turnbull enjoying the Landcare Forum. *Photos courtesy Western LLS.*

The rain continued throughout the forum but failed to dampen everyone's spirits. The semi-formal dinner on Friday night was a resounding success, with the Darling River Dirt Band, led by Western Local Land Services Community Education Officer Fiona Harris, rocking the town.

Anne Holst, Northern Regional Landcare Facilitator for the Western Region, found the forum particularly beneficial.

'There were plenty of concurrent activities relating to improved wellbeing, such as healing massages, Wild Wacky Wonderful Women Workshops, and information on issues such as mental health, legal

and financial advice and available drought resources', said Ms Holst.

'It was great to be able to partner with other local organisations to include all manner of information and ideas for the Landcare community.

'Landcare is about the land, but it must also recognise what people need to keep themselves and their enterprises sustainable.'

Communiqué from the Western Lands Advisory Council

**By Geoff Wise
Chairperson
Western Lands Advisory
Council**

In opening this communiqué, I extend my congratulations and thanks to Crown Lands, the Rural Assistance Authority, the NSW Department of Primary Industries, the Office of Environment and Heritage and the Western, Murray and Riverina Local Land Services for their financial support in sponsoring the ongoing production of a Western Newsletter, and to Sally Ware for her commitment in coordinating the production. These commitments have allowed this communiqué to cover four meetings held by the Western Lands Advisory Council (WLAC), on 21 November 2013 and 26 February, 19 May and 2 September 2014.

Secondly, I acknowledge the varying seasonal conditions that have been experienced across the western areas over the last 12 months, with some areas in the northern region continuing with unrelenting drought conditions, and many areas approaching summer with very limited surface water supplies.

Personal issues

Since the last communiqué, Ministerial portfolios have changed. The WLAC has historically been answerable to the State Government through the Minister for Lands. Hon. Kevin Humphries now holds multiple responsibilities as Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water and Minister for Western NSW, as well as being Member for Barwon, providing the WLAC with a one-stop shop for communications for most of the issues we address.

During 2014 the terms of appointment of most members of the WLAC have expired. Our current membership is:

- Ken Turner, representing the interests of Pastoralists of West Darling
- Andrew Lewis and Clive Linnett AFSM, OAM, representing Local Government
- Ray Scott and Jim Maynard, representing NSW Farmers
- Harley Toomey and Des Jones, representing Aboriginal interests
- Adrian Davey, representing the Nature Conservation Council
- Mrs Jill Fessey in her role as an independent Western Lands Lessee
- Mark Peacock, representing the Minister for the Environment
- Greg Markwick, representing the Minister for Primary Industries
- Cameron Ricketts, representing the Minister for Resources
- Andrew Bell in his role as Western Lands Commissioner.

I was appointed in 2013 as the Independent Chair of the WLAC.

Members retiring from the WLAC are Mr Rory Treweeke, Mr Peter Ponder and Dr Beryl Carmichael. The term of appointment for Mr Ray Scott will finish on 30 November, and he will be succeeded by Mrs Katie Davies. I extend my thanks publicly for all their valued contributions to the WLAC over extended periods.

Presentations by invited speakers

Throughout the meetings a number of relevant and informative presentations were made to the WLAC. Copies of their presentations may be available directly from the presenters, or

through Shaun Barker, Executive Officer for the WLAC, Dubbo. These presentations and presenters include:

- Surface Water Rights in the Western Division: Richard Wheatley, Senior Water Regulation Officer, NSW Office of Water, Dubbo
- Total Grazing Pressure and Carbon Storage in Semi-Arid Rangelands of NSW: Dr Cathy Waters, Senior Research Scientist, Pasture Systems, Department of Primary Industries, Trangie
- Carbon Sequestration Update: Andrew Bell, Western Lands Commissioner, and Sharon Hawke, Assistant Western Lands Commissioner, Dubbo
- Annual Inspection of the Wild Dog Barrier Fence: Andrew Bell (Chair, Wild Dog Destruction Board) and Ken Turner, Member, Wild Dog Destruction Board
- Western Division Range Condition Assessment Program: Sharon Hawke, Assistant Western Lands Commissioner, Dubbo
- Boundary Fencing Provisions—Dividing Fences Act / Western Lands Act: Andrew Bell, Western Lands Commissioner, and Sharon Hawke, Assistant Western Lands Commissioner
- Native Title Rights in the Western Division: Andrew Bell, Western Lands Commissioner
- Weather Radar System for Western NSW: Belinda Barlow, Executive Officer, Orana Regional Organisation of Councils
- Total Grazing Pressure Management and Benefits: Russell Grant, Western Local Lands Service, Cobar.

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Crown Lands Review

The WLAC received a number of briefings and updates regarding the Crown Lands Review. These were delivered by Ms Alison Stone, Executive General Manager, Crown Lands, and Andrew Bell, Western Lands Commissioner, over several meetings. This provided great opportunities for WLAC members to interrogate and deliberate and to influence an ultimate submission to the relevant components of the Crown Lands Review by our Council. The WLAC was privileged to be one of a small number of external groups that the Government specifically identified for consultation. The key responses to the numerically listed recommendations in the Crown Lands Review by the WLAC were:

- **Recommendation 1:** Conduct a strategic assessment of NSW Government needs to determine which Crown land is required for core service delivery or has state or regional values. **WLAC position:** Supported in principle—Require that Western Lands Leases be included in any strategic assessment undertaken by the Department.
- **Recommendation 2:** Conduct a pilot program, in consultation with the Division of Local Government, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure [now Planning & Environment] and key stakeholders, to test and refine the state and local land criteria and to develop an implementation plan for the transfer of local land. **WLAC position:** Supported in principle—Require that a pilot program be run in a low-population, low-value, predominately rural Council area that parallels and reflects those circumstances experienced by Councils in the Western Division.
- **Recommendation 3:** Devolve land of local interest to local councils to meet local needs. **WLAC position:** Supported in principle—Supported where devolved land meets local council needs, but requires a case-by-case negotiation in all other cases.

- **Recommendation 4:** Devolve Crown land to other NSW Government agencies if they are best placed to manage the values and risks associated with a parcel of land. **WLAC position:** Supported in principle.
- **Recommendation 5:** Local Land Services to work with the relevant stakeholders to develop assessment criteria to review all travelling stock routes (TSRs) and determine their future ownership and management. **WLAC position:** Supported in principle—Require that the pilot program specifically consider TSRs, public watering places (PWP) and tenants' leases (TLs) in the Western Division, which are unique to this part of NSW.
- **Recommendation 6:** Establish the Crown Lands Division as a Public Trading Enterprise through a staged transformation process. **WLAC position:** Support with caution.
- **Recommendation 17:** Develop new, consolidated Crown lands legislation. **WLAC position:** Supported in principle—Require that the contemporary and relevant provisions of the *Western Lands Act 1901* be brought forward into the new, consolidated Crown lands legislation, including retention of (a) the roles/functions and membership of the WLAC, and (b) the title and functions of the Western Lands Commissioner.
- **Recommendation 18:** Repeal eight or more existing Acts. **WLAC position:** Supported in principle—Require that the contemporary and relevant provisions of the *Western Lands Act 1901* be brought forward into the new, consolidated Crown lands legislation, including retention of (a) the roles/functions and membership of the WLAC, and (b) the title and functions of the Western Lands Commissioner.
- **Recommendation 19:** Abolish commons as a discrete category of land. **WLAC position:** Supported in principle.
- **Recommendation 20:** Amend the *Roads Act 1993* so that the Minister is no longer a roads authority. **WLAC position:**

Supported in principle—Must provide that the Minister retains existing powers to establish and dedicate roads in the Western Division as part of the Legal Roads Network Project, until this Project has been finalised.

- **Recommendation 21:** Responsibility for all roads used to provide access to the general public to rest with the other roads authorities under the *Roads Act 1993*. **WLAC position:** Supported in principle—Require that the unique situation of the Unincorporated Area be considered in the absence of a Local Government Authority.
- **Recommendation 22:** Remove the option to dedicate Crown land in the future. **WLAC position:** Not supported.
- **Recommendation 24:** Review activities requiring landowner consent from Crown Lands Division. **WLAC position:** Supported in principle—Land Owner's Consent should no longer be required where the proposed development is consistent with the purpose of the underlying lease or reserve.
- **Recommendation 27:** Review the eligibility criteria for conversion of Western Lands leases held for agriculture or cultivation and perpetual Western Lands grazing leases with current Cultivation Consents where the land has been developed. **WLAC position:** Supported in principle—In particular, explore the concept of land capability and suitability, as well as future use needs for urban growth, as determining factors in the eligibility for conversion.
- **Recommendation 28:** Allow conversion of perpetual Western Lands grazing leases on the same terms as Western Lands leases held for agriculture or cultivation, where there is a current Cultivation Consent over all or part of the land contained in the grazing lease and the land has been developed. **WLAC position:** Supported in principle—In particular, explore the concept of land capability and suitability, as well as future use needs for urban growth, as

determining factors in the eligibility for conversion.

- **Recommendation 29:** Compare existing Crown land leasehold conversion processes. **WLAC Position:** supported in principle—Require that matters of equity must be considered.
- **Recommendation 30:** Permit certain additional land uses where appropriate on Western Lands leases. **WLAC position:** Supported in principle—Provided that any additional use maintains the productive and environmental capability and values of the land (excluding urban expansion).
- **Recommendation 31:** Revise the reserves framework to better facilitate multiple use of land compatible with the reserve purpose. **WLAC position:** Supported.
- **Recommendation 32:** Move to a two-tier reserve management structure by removing reserve trusts. **WLAC position:** Supported.
- **Recommendation 33:** Allow councils to manage reserves under the local government legislation. **WLAC position:** Supported.
- **Recommendation 34:** Support community member participation in Crown land management that encourages good governance. **WLAC position:** Supported in principle.

Local Government review

Following various briefings and discussions, the WLAC resolved to write to the Hon. Andrew Stoner, Deputy Premier, providing advice for inclusion in a submission to the Independent Local Government Review covering the following broad issues:

1. The WLAC has no confidence that the proposed Far West Regional Authority (FWRA) model will result in any significant economic gain, nor creation of employment opportunities in western NSW;
2. The WLAC understands that the establishment of the Local Lands Services (LLSs) has already

addressed duplication of natural resource management (NRM) through the rolling together of LHPAs and CMAs;

3. The WLAC understands that the intent of the Crown Lands Review is to address duplication of land administration; and
4. The WLAC sees no benefit and significant inefficiencies of rolling together of NRM and/or land administration services where the proposed FWRA model seeks to address the social issues of western NSW.

Biosecurity legislative reform

The WLAC made an out-of-session recommendation to the Biosecurity Legislative Reform process, reflecting the following general opinions:

- The Reform Panel should give serious consideration to the opinions expressed by the members of the Wild Dog Destruction Board (WDDDB), given that these members have been elected by constituent groups (NSW Farmers Association, Pastoralists Association of West Darling, Western Local Land Services, and the Western Lands Commissioner) similar to many of the constituent groups represented on the WLAC.
- The primary function of the WDDDB and its staff is to maintain the NSW section of the national wild dog barrier fence as a piece of infrastructure with adequate security to prevent the movement of wild dogs into NSW from the adjoining states.
- Essential components include:
 - Ensuring and securing adequate funds through rates establishment and collection from across the whole of the Western Division, securing appropriate dedicated State Government contributions, and subsequent funds management;
 - Determining necessary plant, equipment, housing and support needs for staff;

- Staff employment and support; and
- Having a board of members each with a special interest in the purpose of the fence, irrespective of their other interests.

- Any historic function of the WDDDB and its guiding legislation in regard to control or destruction of wild dogs within NSW was usurped by other more recent legislation and service delivery mechanisms many years ago. Currently these responsibilities lie predominantly within the jurisdiction of the LLS system. In view of this, the title 'Wild Dog Destruction Act' is inappropriate, as the practical role of the business has no responsibility for destruction of wild dogs. It would be appropriate for any current reference to dog (or pest) control within the Wild Dog Destruction Act to be evaluated with a view to its deletion, knowing that similar responsibilities are now covered by other more appropriate and more contemporary legislation.
- If it is accepted that the *Wild Dog Destruction Act 1921* and the practical functions the Act guides are to be merged, the most logical merging is considered to be within the Crown Lands Act by creation of a mechanism such as a special Crown reserve or dedication for the purpose of a 'dog proof fence' or some similarly available instrument under this legislation.

Other Submissions by the Western Lands Advisory Council

North-West Surface Water Sharing Plan

The WLAC wrote to the respective regional directors/managers of Fisheries NSW and the NSW Office of Water seeking their agreement to work with the Pastoralists'

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Association of West Darling to review the current rules for surface water approvals in the area covered by the North-West Surface Water Sharing Plan, with the aim of improving the efficiency of the current water licensing and approvals process.

Camel control

Following concerns regarding the expanding range of feral camels across leasehold lands and roads in the Byrock, Bourke and Cobar areas, the WLAC has prompted action for a coordinated control program to be implemented. This requires the involvement of a number of different agencies in working with the affected landholders, including with owners of the original source property.

At each of our meetings the WLAC received regular updates of the progress being made.

Assistance for drought-affected graziers

The WLAC has approached Minister Kevin Humphries MP, asking for his help, support and initiative in seeking to have the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder immediately offer a tender to purchase water licences on the Intersecting Streams and Barwon-Darling River, focused predominately on those small licences that are currently not active. Such an initiative by the Minister has the potential of generating over \$20 million cash flow for approximately 150 graziers in north-west NSW suffering extreme drought conditions and associated extreme negative cash flow. Calling for tenders

does not preclude irrigators from participating in the market to purchase water licences.

Representations by G Wise on behalf of the WLAC

As Chair, I have visited Ministers in Sydney in April and June to discuss a range of matters, including membership of the Advisory Council, Crown Lands and Local Government reviews, and addressing drought conditions.

In early May I represented the WLAC with a group of senior Crown Lands Managers to discuss matters of mutual interest with Wentworth Shire Councillors and senior management, and with Departmental staff at Wentworth and Broken Hill.

Innovative online tools simplify native vegetation choices for farmers

Understanding native vegetation laws in NSW is now easier with the release of four new online tools to help landholders determine whether their clearing activities require approval.

The Office of Environment and Heritage's Chief Executive Terry Bailey said the online toolkit would answer the key common questions landholders ask when they are investigating their land management options.

'We know most farmers want to manage their properties sustainably and do the right thing in complying with laws around land clearing', Mr Bailey said.

'These new tools empower the landholder to understand their management options in their own personal situations.'

In programming these tools, the Office of Environment and Heritage has created the ability to generate simple answers to a landholder's enquiry by sorting through land and property information and the details of Native Vegetation Regulations in NSW.

- Tool 1 helps landowners to determine whether or not the Native Vegetation Act applies.
- Tool 2 looks at assessing the category of vegetation.

- Tool 3 looks at what clearing can be done without requiring approval under the Act.
- Tool 4 covers Routine Agricultural Management Activities.

'Anything that cuts red tape and makes it easier for landholders to get on with their business is a valuable addition to our regulation information', Mr Bailey said.

'The tools work using spatial viewers, which enable landholders to identify parts of their land where they are considering vegetation management and to view only those rules that relate to that area.

'Privacy is assured, and no information fed into the tools is retained', he said.

Mr Bailey said that the innovative tools will help landholders—big and small—to work out how they can get on with the job while complying with environmental regulations.

The tools can be found at:

www.environment.nsw.gov.au/vegetation/onlinetool.htm

Pest work brings rewards at Yanga National Park

The next phase of a successful 12-month pest control program at Yanga National Park is under way as spring fox baiting keeps up the pressure on ferals.

NPWS Regional Pest Management Officer Jason Neville said foxes, pigs, rabbits and deer had been targeted in pest control activities over the past year, in a range of control measures.

'Pest control remains a priority for us and we are pleased to see some good results in recent programs', he said.

Feral pig impacts have been slashed by ground trapping programs, which have removed 495 feral pigs from the park.

'Local staff at Yanga have also implemented a successful 1080

ground baiting program to reduce fox numbers. Almost 450 fox baits were laid at 238 fixed bait stations during autumn. A further fox baiting program is occurring in spring, to coincide with neighbour activities', said Mr Neville.

'Local contractors have been employed to control rabbits by deep ripping and have undertaken nearly 700 hours of warren ripping works. A 2-day aerial operation added to the success of the on-ground works by removing 10 feral goats, seven foxes, 116 deer and 404 pigs', he said.

'Large pest animals like goats and pigs are significant threats to the conservation of the natural environment. Pest animals invade native wildlife habitat and displace

native species, including ground nesting birds.

'The sensitive wetland landscapes of Yanga National Park provide critical habitat for other species such as the green and golden bell frog. Any pest control measures that reduce wetland impacts, such as those caused by feral pigs, will have obvious benefits for this iconic local species.

'Wherever possible, NPWS pest control programs are coordinated with those occurring on neighbouring agricultural lands. Larger landscape-scale and integrated pest control programs have a much greater benefit to both the local environment and neighbouring agricultural areas', Mr Neville said.



Yanga Lake. Photo by Paul Childs

Visitor ventures taking shape at Toorale

The Warrego River floodplains—stretching out to the horizon with a perfectly framed view of Mt Gunderbooka in the background—are among the new vistas on offer just a short walk from your car as the National Parks and Wildlife Service puts the finishing touches to some exciting new visitor developments at Toorale, near Bourke.

NPWS Area Manager Andrew Wall said the developments at Toorale were part of the plan to share this amazing natural and cultural asset with the community, providing a boost to tourism options the Bourke area.

'Toorale's story as a former pastoral property and its long and ongoing connection with Aboriginal people and their culture is something to be celebrated, along with its amazing outback landscapes and ecosystems', Mr Wall said.

'In building visitor experiences on Toorale, we have consulted with communities and stakeholders and have developed opportunities to enable relaxing, unwinding, and the capability for tourists to immerse themselves in the vast surroundings', he said. 'We are pleased with what's coming together, and hope visitors will be too.'

By the time this newsletter goes to print, the new infrastructure and information points will be almost finished. They will include:

- **Karnu Yalpa Many Big Rocks Picnic Area.** This picnic area has been chosen for its scenic outlook and points of interest. The picnic area overlooks the Darling River, where you can see piles of exposed rocks. The site was first used by Aboriginal people for fish traps. Later the rocks, which were much higher than they are now, were blown up with dynamite to allow paddle-steamers access up the river.
- **Withawithalana – Mount Talowla Lookout.** Flowering wildflowers, including goodenias, emu bush and hopbush, can be seen on the short walk from the car park to the summit of Mount Talowla, which offers a spectacular view across the Warrego floodplain.
- **Darling River Drive.** A 42-kilometre circuit takes visitors across the Darling River floodplain through Coolabah forest to the Darling River Campground, where visitors can enjoy camping on the banks of the river.



Darling River day use at Karnu Yalpa Many Big Rocks Picnic Area. *Photo supplied by NPWS*

More information on the visitor experiences at Toorale is available from the Bourke NPWS office on 02 6830 0200 or from the web at www.nationalparks.com.au.

And in case you missed the stunning photography exhibition that captured Toorale's transformation following the floods of 2012, you can see pictures here: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/48646673@N07/sets/72157632100150945/with/8220188406/>.

Safety improvements at Tibooburra Aerodrome

**By Tiff Brown
Rangeland Management Officer
NSW Trade & Investment,
Crown Lands, Far West Area
Broken Hill
Phone (08) 8082 5203**

Tibooburra Aerodrome is a Crown Reserve managed by the Tibooburra Aviation Reserve Trust. It provides essential aviation infrastructure to the remote communities living and working in the far North West corner of the state. It is regularly used by the Royal Flying Doctor Service and other emergency aircraft, and it has also been used as a base for spraying by the Plague Locust Commission.

The Aerodrome is currently managed by the Lands Administration

Ministerial Corporation on behalf of the Reserve Trust, but day-to-day management is handled by Aerodrome Reporting Officer Steve McDermott, who is based in Tibooburra.

The Reserve Trust was successful in obtaining money through the Public Reserve Management Fund in late 2013 to erect an animal-proof fence at the Aerodrome. The existing fence was no longer considered adequate to exclude kangaroos and goats. There had been a few near misses with the Royal Flying Doctor Service and a need for 'roo runs' before landing and take-off.

Local Tibooburra fencing contractor Les Shiner was engaged to erect the fence, which included 1.8-metre posts, deer netting and a number of flood gates, over a total distance of 5.5 kilometres. The work was complete at the end of May 2014.



Les Shiner and Tiff Brown inspecting the completed fence in May 2014. *Photo courtesy Crown Lands Division, NSW Trade & Investment*

Woolgrowers continue to protect the national flock from flystrike

By Marius Cuming
Australian Wool Innovation

Woolgrowers, researchers, consultants, vets and welfare experts have discussed the latest developments and trial results from the Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) flystrike prevention program.

Protecting the national flock from flystrike remains a top research priority at AWI. Over the past decade, woolgrowers, through their research development and marketing body, have invested \$47 million in animal health and welfare research, development and extension (RD&E), including more than \$27 million on flystrike prevention.

The National R&D Technical Update on Breach Flystrike Prevention, held on 20 August, heard from a variety of speakers from across Australia.

The genetics and genomics of both sheep and the blowfly continue to be explored to seek new opportunities. The sheep blowfly genome has now been mapped and has been found to contain almost 3000 unique genes that provide opportunities for control. Breeding for breech strike resistance shows how flystrike resistance is highly heritable, and evidence was presented at the Update to show that ram breeders were responding to the

challenge of producing low-wrinkle, high-fleece-weight, high-fertility Merinos.

An update on field trials from SkinTraction® technology was given at the Update, as was a summary of the use of liquid nitrogen to reduce wrinkle; this has gained proof of concept in an early scoping study. The use of laser technology to permanently remove wool follicles has not achieved proof of concept, but new laser technology is being reviewed.

The use of meloxicam as an animal analgesic was discussed, together with a summary of welfare assessments across various novel fly-strike prevention technologies.

Information on the current levels of larval resistance to flystrike-prevention chemicals was presented at the Update. It showed that these chemicals were still measuring up to their label protection periods. The development of ParaBoss—three web-based information packages for managing blowflies, worms and lice (www.paraboss.com.au)—will help woolgrowers to best manage blowfly threats.

A number of growers, brokers and exporters emphasised the ongoing importance of growers completing the National Wool Declaration to meet market requirements. Completion of the Declaration helps provide

more information for the buyers of Australian wool.

The Australian Veterinary Association and the Genetic Review panel regularly assess the progress of AWI's Breech Strike Prevention program; their reports are available on the AWI website. AWI also holds 6-monthly meetings with the main animal welfare lobby groups in Australia. AWI undertakes ongoing consultation with state welfare groups, federal agencies and supply chain customers in the processing, manufacturing and retail sectors. Breeder feedback on breech strike R&D and extension strategies is used to update the RD&E program each year.

AWI Program Manager (Productivity and Animal Welfare) Geoff Lindon summed up the Technical Update by stating that 'AWI, on behalf of woolgrowers, continues to leave no stone unturned in the search for practical solutions for woolgrowers to manage flystrike.'

Presentations were delivered by CSIRO, the Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia, the University of Melbourne, the NSW Department of Primary Industries, the University of New England and the University of Sydney. There were also presentations from Troy Laboratories, Cobbett Technologies and Steinfort Agvet.



Welcome to all the new readers of the Western Newsletter.

The Newsletter has been produced over many years by various state agricultural agencies and distributed to landholders in western NSW. With an increased readership distribution, the Newsletter is now also being mailed to landholders in areas other than the far west.

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