The big mulesing debate – bring on the Dohnes!

As told to Sally Ware by Ben Lane, Manager and Graeme Black, Managing Director, Uardry Dohne Stud, Hay

Background
The Dohne breed was introduced to Australia in 1998. It was developed in South Africa in the 1930s by crossing Peppin type Merino ewes and German Mutton Merino sires. The Dohne is bred to produce a prime slaughter lamb with high growth rate and white, fine to medium style wool. The objective of the breed is to produce 70% meat and 30% wool i.e. a dual purpose sheep. The Dohne is a naturally polled, plain bodied sheep. The breed has been performance bred since the 1970s.

The management at Uardry heard about Dohnes in 1996 through a South African ex-jackeroo. We were concerned about the influx of exotic breeds into Australia. We thought these breeds provide a risk to the Australian wool clip through dark and medullated fibre contamination and if our clients used these breeds they would be unable to return to wool production. At Uardry we set out to find a meat sheep suited to pastoral areas. We wanted a breed with good growth rates and ease of management whilst providing a profitable wool cut that has quality without any black fibres: a true dual-purpose sheep.

The previous General Manager at Uardry, Chris Bowman went to South Africa in 1999 and purchased about 500 fertilised embryos. That was the basis for the Dohne stud at Uardry. The first progeny from the Uardry Dohne stud was sold in 2002. Uardry now runs approximately 2200 stud ewes and about 3000 commercial Dohne cross ewes. We remain one of the leading Dohne studs in the eastern states and sell 500 to 600 rams per year.

So, how does the Dohne cope in the western areas of NSW?
Dohnes fitted in with our ongoing merino operation very easily. We required no changes to our current management system and our fences and yards were suitable. Dohnes do not push through fences. They also appealed to us because they were a genetically advanced breed due to the

Shorn F1 3-year-old Dohne ewes. The plainness of the first cross Dohne can be seen in this photo.

Continued on page 3
A plant that enjoyed the summer rains, while they lasted, is the wonderful little species, the bladder saltbush (*Atriplex vesicara*). Mature plants on the stock route south of Hay have produced plenty of seed this year.

The seed looks like a bladder – hence the name bladder saltbush. Bladder saltbush is a perennial and it is often confused with its cousin the annual Eastern Flat-top saltbush. The bushes and seeds can look similar to the untrained eye and both species are relatively common and exist in similar areas.

Diagrams of the seeds of both types can be viewed in the books *Native Vegetation Guide for the Riverina* and on page 242 of *Plants of Western NSW*.

Many stands of the bladder saltbush have been severely degraded over the years and the plants have been replaced by eastern flat top and poverty bushes. It is worth knowing if you still have stands of bladder saltbush left on your property and keeping an eye on its condition. It is one of the best perennial plants that you can have.

Enjoy reading Issue 122.
The big mulesing debate – bring on the Dohnes! continued from page 1

compulsory requirement for stud producers to objectively measure and select rams based on measurement. We wanted a dual purpose breed but to remain wool producers. The wool is free of pigmented and medullated fibres and we sell it as AAAM Dohne. It averages 19–21 micron with a CV% of fibre diameter similar to merino wool. Dohne wool tends to micron finer than it visually looks. We have often received similar prices for our Dohne wool compared to merino wool. However, they will cut less wool, usually averaging about 5 to 6 kilos per head because of the plainer body of the Dohne. Another benefit of the Dohne is the ewe population is available for breeding and wool production, unlike the female progeny from a terminal sire which is bred to be slaughtered.

We are finding even the first cross F1 Dohne flock will produce a 10 to 20% improvement in a lambing percentage compared to a straight merino flock. We have a Western Division client who has obtained on average, 26% more lambs in his Dohne flock than his merino flock, over 3 years. Furthermore, the joining percentage for Dohne rams can be lower than straight merinos ie 1.5% rather than 2%. The rams are polled and easy care. The Dohne ewes are good mothers. At Uardry, we do not use dogs to muster purebred Dohnes ewes and lambs in the paddock as the ewes will guard their lambs rather than turn and walk away.

We also found Dohnes ran very well on a property near Balranald, which is harder country than Uardry. They are non-selective grazing animals and thus will do much better than straight merinos on similar tucker. Sales of Dohne F1’s at the same time as their pure Merino cousins, run on comparable paddocks at this property, yielded a 10–26% price premium.

As a prime lamb, the Dohne is certainly performing well out here despite the dry. To give an example Uardry turned off 1192 F1 and F2 Dohne wether lambs aged four to five months last November, at the height of the drought (no feeding ), to a feedlot in SA. These lambs weighed an average

See Uardry Dohnes in 2008

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The big mulesing debate
– bring on the Dohnes!
continued from page 3

36.8 kg empty for an average price of $48/head.

Let’s talk about the mulesing issue
The Dohne has been selected as a plain bodied animal which has resulted in the bare skin on the breech naturally increasing in size. The wrinkle free breech area stays dry at all times as there are no wrinkles for urine to be trapped. Historically, we have been mulesing 5% of our Dohnes as a precaution. In 2008, we will cease mulesing our purebred Dohnes and do not expect any problems. F1 and F2 wethers do not get mulesed, however, some of our F1 and F2 ewes will still require small precautionary mules but we anticipate not mulesing at F3. Dohnes are not prone to flystrike. As an example, over the past summer, despite the wet and humid conditions (Uardry received 150 mm from December to January) there was not one Dohne fly struck. We are confident that our Dohne clients are in a better position to cease mulesing because of the fact that the Dohne has a long history of genetic selection for a plain body and a bare breech.

Are you happy to talk to others about your experience?
Yes absolutely, we are happy to talk about our experience with Dohnes. We can be contacted during office hours at Uardry on (02) 6993 5101; Ben Lane 0427 206 239 or people can visit the Uardry website www.uardry.com and follow the Dohne Tab.

Western Lands
Commissioner Update

Tibooburra Aerodrome
During February and March the annual service and maintenance program was completed for the ground lighting system at Tibooburra Aerodrome to ensure the lights, batteries and windsock continue to meet CASA guidelines. Also during this inspection, changes were implemented which enable the lights to be turned on remotely through a mobile phone service instead of having to be physically at the aerodrome. This will be of benefit to both users of the aerodrome, particularly the Royal Flying Doctor Service and Neville Hill who manages the aerodrome’s daily operations.

Control of noxious weeds in the Unincorporated Area
The Department recently completed an extensive spraying program for both Mesquite and African Boxthorn on roadsides in the Unincorporated Area and areas within the Silverton Common. In total there were 111 hours of spraying completed on the roadsides and 180 hours of spraying on the common. This is follow-up treatment to a spraying program that was implemented last year to ensure these noxious weeds are controlled as much as possible on these areas of Crown land.

Bio-diesel plantations of Jatropha curcas in the Western Division
Recently the Department has received enquiries and applications regarding the ability to plant Jatropha trees on properties in the Western Division for bio-fuel production.

This plant has been declared a noxious weed in Western Australia and the Northern Territory because it is invasive, hard to control and toxic to people and animals. While the plant will establish and thrive in drought conditions and on poor soils, yields without irrigation are so low that it makes the oil production uneconomical.
Jatropha is described as being able to ‘grow in the poorest wasteland’ and ‘survive up to three consecutive years of drought’ and whilst it would grow well in the Western Division a spokesman for the Invasive Species Council has said ‘It could be a disaster if this plant was deliberately put in the ground as a crop or plantation in Australia.’

The NSW Department of Primary Industries has identified a need for research into plants nominated for bio-fuel production, but has not yet commenced a research program. Indications are that New South Wales is likely to follow the example of WA and the Northern Territory and declare Jatropha a noxious weed.

From Departmental investigations so far, consenting to the planting of a potential new weed in the Western Division would be contrary to good land management practices. Therefore, lessees should be aware that the Department will not consent to the planting or cultivation of Jatropha on any Western Lands Leases in the Western Division.

**Boundary fencing**

Boundary fencing disputes are regularly referred to the Department of Lands (Western Lands) for resolution. In all cases the Department’s first response is to determine whether the two affected neighbours have discussed the fencing issue amongst themselves and if not recommend that they contact each other to do so. All lessees have requirements and obligations under the conditions on their Western Lands Leases to maintain the standard of their boundary fencing. They have a common law obligation to contain their livestock, including goats which they identify as belonging to them, within their property boundaries.

In the majority of boundary fencing disputes it could be necessary for the local Rangeland Management Officer to arrange an inspection of the boundary fence in question and get the affected parties together to facilitate discussion on resolving the problem.

The Department is currently investigating an amendment to the Western Lands Act to incorporate similar definitions as the Dividing Fences Act. This would allow for a ‘traditional or normal’ boundary fence for a region and where a landholder introduces a species of livestock that requires a higher standard of fencing to contain them, that landholder should be liable for the extra cost of fencing above that for a normal boundary fence.

Where the boundary fence is not stock proof, both neighbours should contribute equally to get the fence up to the normal standard by either repairing or replacing the fence.

An information sheet on the Dividing Fences Act is available from offices of Department of Lands for further information. The fact sheet is also available from the Department’s web site: www.lands.nsw.gov.au>about us>publications>fact sheets>crown land

Generally when livestock are adequately fed and watered they are content to be contained by fencing. Rams and bucks require high standard fencing to contain them during the periods when they are not running with cycling females of the same species.

Despite having the backing of legislation, the Department believes that the most satisfactory results are obtained by the adjoining landholders coming to an agreement together to maintain boundary fences to acceptable standards.

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LMD 17590 May/June 2008
Pioneering product takes the pain out of mulesing

With consumers for wool products becoming increasingly aware of animal welfare issues, Bayer Animal Health is seeking to offer some relief to lambs and wool growers alike with Tri-Solfen, a powerful anaesthetic developed by a paediatrician at the Westmead Children’s Hospital in Sydney.

‘Bayer is in the business of developing science for a better life and we see this as a fantastic Australian innovation which provides pain relief in large farm animals,’ said Bayer’s Andrew Mason. ‘Bayer recognises that farm animals feel pain in processes such as mulesing. This is a brilliant solution that we can further develop locally and take to the world.’

‘This product solves so many problems for the Australian farming community,’ said Martin Oppenheimer, Chairman of the Australian Wool Growers Association. ‘With no alternative to mulesing in sight, Tri-Solfen means we can continue the vital procedure and satisfy retailers.’

Mulesing has long worried animal welfare groups and led to a ban on Australian wool products by a number of American retailers.

‘Wool producers are very concerned about retailers who are under pressure from animal rights groups,’ said Mr Oppenheimer. ‘I won’t have to persuade producers to use Tri-Solfen, the market will do that.’

‘We have a moral obligation to our animals and this product provides us with an opportunity to become the first farming community in the world to recognise that they feel pain and to do something about it,’ he added.

Tri-Solfen combines two local anaesthetics with adrenaline and an antiseptic. The result is a product that relieves pain, promotes healing, improves mobility and feeding, results in better mothering-up and allows growers to produce ethically treated wool.

‘Like organically grown crops, Tri-Solfen gives producers an opportunity to sell ethically grown wool on the international market and in the long term, reap the financial benefits,’ explained Mr Oppenheimer.

Dr Sheil, who treats surgical and trauma wounds in children and also grazes sheep on her property in the Central West of New South Wales, said she decided to work on a pain relief product for lambs after accusations of cruelty were levelled against Australian producers by foreign animal welfare groups.

‘Tri-Solfen is an anaesthetic that can be sprayed onto the wound immediately after mulesing,’ said Dr Sheil who is also head of Research and Development for the local start-up, Animal Ethics. ‘In the future, Tri-Solfen may also be used to relieve pain during other procedures such as de-sexing in sheep and pigs and de-horning in cattle.’

Tri-Solfen is available from veterinary surgeons who are provided with product information and support by Bayer Animal Health specialists.

‘Tri-Solfen gives veterinary surgeons an opportunity to reduce the pain and suffering associated with wool production while improving their relationships with growers,’ said Andrew Mason.

Bayer Animal Health believes that Tri-Solfen represents the first attempt by a global pharmaceutical company to reduce the stress and pain traditionally suffered by large farm animals.
Pain relief at mulesing is a better choice

A breakthrough pain relief spray from Bayer is delivering real benefits to woolgrowers.

This pioneering product is applied as a spray to the mulesing wound. Its ability to reduce pain and blood loss, plus improve wound healing, means a faster and fuller recovery for the animal and more efficient management of your property.

“From a pain relief point of view it’s a huge step forward.”
“When they’re doing better, we’re making money.”

William Roberts, QLD

“It’s their ability to bond back with mum.”
“It really has helped us get the lambs weaned earlier.”

Paul Walton, VIC

“It’s just a productivity increase which covers the cost.”
“It’s the best for lambs, the best for productivity. The best for my business.”

Rod Taylor, WA

“It certainly does improve the healing process.”
“No lambs were away on their own, they were all with their mothers.”

Warwick Fletcher, NSW

Extract from press release;
Australian Wool Industry cautions accuracy.
24 February 2008, Sweden
“The Australian Wool Industry Taskforce supports the use of pain relief in the post mulesing process and has actively promoted it through retailer tool kits which are distributed around the world. Australian Wool Innovation, the research and development company has also supported the use of pain relief as part of the mulesing process.”

Stuart McCullough, Australian Wool Industry Taskforce / AWI

Talk to your vet about using pain relief or visit www.betterchoices.com.au
Blore family uses local knowledge for innovative goat trap design

By Katrina Gepp, Community Support Officer, Western CMA

Using the natural features of his property and his knowledge of feral goat behaviour, Mr John Blore of Belmont Station near Broken Hill designed and built a large-scale fencing project that will allow him to reduce goat numbers and protect native pasture.

Phil Blore purchased Belmont Station in 1981 and he and his son, John, operate it along with John’s wife, Airlie, and their two daughters, Alice and Gracie.

‘Approximately half of the property consists of the Mundi Mundi Plains, while the remainder is rugged terrain,’ John said.

‘Two natural features made goat control extremely hard. There’s a six kilometre water frontage to the Umberumeka Reservoir where it’s difficult to trap the goats and once they head for the rough terrain of Mt Mundi Mundi and Mt Umberumeka it’s virtually impossible.

‘At any one time there’d be about a thousand goats on the place so that even when you planned to have six to eight months feed for sheep that were lambing, the goats would come through and it would all be gone in a few weeks.

‘Having such large numbers of goats on the place was a cause of constant frustration. ‘We’ve had eight years of drought and of course we’ve reduced our stock numbers accordingly, but with the heavy numbers of goats on that delicate hill country we needed to take control of their numbers.

John’s solution was to design a series of long fences with wings that took advantage of the natural features of the property such as sheer cliff faces, natural soaks and blind-spots over ridges, as well as knowledge of the goat’s behaviour to funnel them into traps.

‘We put in about eight kilometres of fencing and four traps. I’ve used wings and flood gates to maximise its effectiveness so we’re now able to trap goats off 11,000 hectares or about a quarter of the property.

‘It took four months to complete the fencing and the day after we finished we tried it out.

‘With three of us on motorbikes we rounded up six hundred goats in an hour and a half.

‘They headed for the hills and rounded a blind spot where they thought they were safe, but that funnelled them into a race and then into a holding yard and with the long wings we’ve built there wasn’t any escape.

‘I knew then that all the planning and hard work was going to pay off,’ John said.

John’s designs also extended to the traps themselves. Rather than the traditional steel ramps, John has built rock ramps.

‘While most goats will walk up a traditional steel ramp, some of them baulk at it, so it seemed like a good idea to use the rocks that they’re used to climbing on and it’s working well,’ he said.

Since John finished the fencing in mid-February he’s caught 1,450 goats.

‘It was extremely difficult work. The terrain is so rugged that six kilometres
according to GPS points was actually eight kilometres when you took into account the vertical rises. I estimated that it would take 800 hours, but in some places it took a week to do one kilometre so it ended up being more like 2,000 hours – but it was worth the effort.

‘Now we can start controlling the stock that’s on the land and to be honest, when you’ve got domestic stock on that area you’re spending time there so you’re able to control the weeds and other things like that.

‘Once the ferals make the country unviable it starts to become neglected.

‘We haven’t had any decent rain since the fencing was complete so it’s hard to see the benefits, but when it does we’ll be in a better position to let the country revive,’ he said.

The area has a long history of regeneration work. Records show that when Belmont was part of the Mundi Mundi Pastoral Company in the early 1900s, large quantities of mulga were cut for fencing, fuel and other needs resulting in the declaration of a Mulga Protection Zone, making it illegal to cut green mulga.

The Blore family continue in the footsteps of those early pioneers who cared for their country.

‘I’m very happy with the project. I guess everyone’s got ideas of how to make their place better but not necessarily the means to bring it to fruition.

‘The Western CMA funding meant that even though things have been tight financially, we’ve still been able to make improvements on our place,’ Mr Blore said.

The Blore family was one of 199 Western Catchment land managers who improved the condition of their property through the Western Catchment Management Authority’s $4.3 million 2007 Incentive Program. Applications recently closed for the 2008 Incentive Program. People interested in receiving information about future funding opportunities should contact their local Western CMA office or ring 1800 032 101.

The Incentive Programs are provided through the NSW and Australian Governments and is part of a combined $23 million commitment to the Western Catchment over a four year period.
It was hands-on learning for forty-five people who undertook a field trip to Fowlers Gap Research Station and Langawirra Station on the first day of the Sustainable Grazing Forum 2008 held in Broken Hill from 12–14 March.

A further twenty participants joined the group on day two to take part in lecture-style presentations while the third day provided an opportunity to tailor information to their property. They took part in one-on-one discussions with speakers and CMA staff and using mapping, modelling and software to develop a sustainable grazing plan for their farm business.

The Forum was hosted by the Western Catchment Management Authority (CMA) with additional financial support from the Lower-Murray Darling CMA.

The aim of the forum was to look at the environment we live and work in from the point of view of the geology, soils, plants and animals and to recognise that they are all interconnected and the management of each element needs to be part of a property’s grazing system.

The journey to Fowlers Gap Research Station featured commentaries by experts on geology, soil and local history. While at the Research Station, people were able to observe vegetation change and natural banding, discuss the ecology of our saltbushes and trends in the Rangeland Assessment Program (RAP) since the early 1990s.

Soil carbon expert, John Lawrie of the Central-West CMA, gave an easy to understand explanation of the potential of soil carbon credits for landholders and outlined four major principles to benefit soil carbon increases in the far-west. These were increasing groundcover, increasing perennial plants, increasing biodiversity and decreasing disturbance.

The idea of cultivating carbon as an income source is very new, but it’s one option for landholders to consider and may be an additional incentive to adopt the four principles that are beneficial for the landscape.

Highlights of the field-site at Langawirra Station included visiting a rangeland restoration project and a demonstration by Lachie Gall of Langawirra Station of managing invasive native scrub with a crocodile machine, which for many landholders was the first time they’d seen one in action.

James Val of the Department of Environment and Climate Change showed a range of animals caught the previous night using pit-fall traps, including two fat-tailed dunnarts, striped skinks, scorpions and legless lizards to demonstrate the variety of animals found in the rangelands.

Alex James of NSW University spoke about her research into the roles goanna and echidna holes play in aiding vegetation growth. Their holes collect litter and store rainfall, which make them ideal sites for germinating plants.
David Eldridge of the Department of Environment and Climate Change conducted an experiment using a disk permeameter to very graphically demonstrate the role vegetation plays in assisting the soil’s ability to absorb moisture. Water infiltrated the soil far more readily around plants, due to the channels left by the plant’s roots in comparison to the bare soil.

The Western CMA’s 2008 Incentive Program was officially launched at Fowlers Gap by General Manager, Daryl Green, in sight of a stand of rare Curly Mallee protected by fencing funded through last year’s program.

Tas Clarke of Kayrunnera Station said he found the forum very useful. ‘Everywhere we went I learnt something new or heard about something I hadn’t considered before.’

‘I was particularly interested in the talk from Peter Jessop of the Department of Primary Industries about the need to supplement perennial plants like saltbush and bluebush as a feed source to help with digestion and energy conversion.

‘I’ve noticed myself that when I provide a supplement like molophos the sheep have a lot more energy and instead of hanging around the water point they move off, which has benefits for the country as well. ‘Knowing that the science backs up what I’ve noticed myself gives me a lot of confidence that I’m doing the right thing,’ Mr Clarke said.

During the lecture style presentations people heard from nine rangeland experts including Ron Hacker, Gemma Junk, Genevieve Carruthers, Robyn Neeson, Greg Curran and Steve McLeod, who covered a range of topics from a review of grazing practices and infrastructure, Environmental Management Systems to organics and animal nutrition issues.

People interested in copies of the presentations should contact the Western CMA’s Broken Hill office on (08) 8082 5200.

Representatives from the Western and Lower-Murray Darling CMAs also outlined each of their organisation’s Catchment Plans and funding opportunities for landholders through their Incentives Program.

Western CMA appreciated the time and effort people put into coming to the forum and hoped that when they went home they looked at their paddocks differently and took more notice of what they saw.
By Katie Richie, Public Affairs Officer, Department of Environment and Climate Change

The most significant ibis breeding event in the Murray Darling Basin in eight years is underway at Narran Lakes in north western New South Wales.

National Parks and Wildlife Service, Narrabri Area Regional Manager, Rob Smith said the substantial rain across northern NSW and southern and central Queensland in late 2007 and early 2008 has resulted in the best environmental conditions in much of the western area since 2000.

‘Waterbirds are breeding across NSW in response to the abundance of water and revitalised wetland environments. River Red Gums, Coolibah, water couch, lignum and reed beds have been rejuvenated in many areas.

‘Local National Park and Wildlife Service staff observed 40,000 – 50,000 pairs of Straw-necked Ibis nesting at Narran Lakes, with chicks already hatched at most nests,’ he said.

‘White Ibis, Royal Spoonbills and Glossy Ibis were also spotted nesting. While various duck species, Black Swans, Pelicans, Herons, Egrets and Black-winged Stilts are also enjoying the newly revived Lakes.

‘Narran Lakes are a natural terminal lake system dependent on flows from the Condamine-Balonne catchment in Queensland.

‘Staff from the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change and Department of Water and Energy have been working with the Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Water to monitor the volume of water flowing into Narran Lakes.

‘It is important that flows down the river continue until the breeding event is successfully completed.

‘At the end of March the Murray-Darling Basin Commission delivered a further 11 gigalitres of water to boost water flows to the lakes which were declining.'
‘The rain and inflows have come at a vital time for the health of rivers and wetlands suffering extreme stress from the extended dry period. However, further rainfalls and flows are required to support the long-term health of our wetlands and rivers,’ he said.

Peery Lake in the Paroo-Darling National Park is also experiencing its best conditions in eight years.

NPWS Broken Hill, Acting Area Manager Shirley Meyer said Peery Lake is filling for the first time since 2000.

‘It’s just amazing to witness the water birds as you capture the sun setting with a 360 degree view over the lake and the landscape,’ Ms Meyer said.

‘NPWS Rangers and visitors have observed ibis, ducks, avocets and herons enjoying the newly filled lake. Regular aerial surveys are being undertaken to monitor bird movements and numbers.

‘Croaking frogs, reptiles, kangaroos and scores of other birds are also utilising the revived lake environment.

‘The water flows have rejuvenated reed beds and water plants and submerged mound springs to create island havens for animal activities.

‘Peery is unique because of the artesian mound springs within the lake bed. The mound springs become islands when the lake is filled. River red gums, coolabahs and a range of plants all grow on the island making it one of the rarest habitat types in New South Wales.

‘Flows from Queensland reached the Paroo River early this year and have over flowed through to Peery and other lakes within the Paroo overflow.

‘Peery Lake is one of the larger lakes in the overflow system.’

Ms Meyer explained that unfortunately pest animals benefit from the good conditions as well.

‘NPWS Rangers will ensure that extra control activities are undertaken to manage pest numbers in the park.’

Managers of internationally recognised ‘Ramsar’ wetlands from across the state met recently in Dubbo, where acknowledgement was made of the state’s newest Ramsar wetland – the Paroo River wetlands, in the Western Division.

The path to international recognition for the magnificent wetlands included extensive consultation with the local Aboriginal owners – the Baakandji and Budjiti people.

Wetlands managers recognised

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The path to international recognition for the magnificent wetlands included extensive consultation with the local Aboriginal owners – the Baakandji and Budjiti people.

Phillip Eulo representing the Budjiti people and William Riley, representing the Baakandji were delighted to receive certificates from Lisa Corby, Director-General NSW Department Environment and Climate Change and Chris Schweizer, representing the Commonwealth Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts acknowledging their role in managing these important wetlands.
Wetland rehabilitation project: reinstating wetting and drying regimes

Project purpose
The Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority (LMD CMA) is undertaking a ‘Wetland Rehabilitation’ project involving 13 priority wetlands along the Murray and lower Darling Rivers. The project aims to reinstate wetting and drying regimes and improve fish passage at these wetlands by removing or modifying existing inlet/outlet structures; the works may also result in water savings.

Field assessments
Technical investigations (including terrestrial flora and fauna investigations, hydrological assessments water quality and aquatic biological assessments and cultural heritage surveys) of the wetlands have been completed by consultants, GHD Pty Ltd.

These investigations have been critical in revealing the environmental values of the wetlands, their overall condition and the factors affecting their condition. The information gathered has contributed to the formulation of actions to rehabilitate the wetlands. This baseline information that has been generated also provides a benchmark of wetland condition that future condition assessments can be compared against. This approach will enable the LMD CMA to gauge the effectiveness of the rehabilitation actions that will be implemented as part of the project.

Rehabilitation and management actions
GHD Pty Ltd has recommended appropriate rehabilitation and management actions for each wetland and works are now progressively being carried out.

Works such as the removal or modification of existing wetland structures (such as blockbanks and levees), or the installation of inlet culverts or regulators, are aimed at improving water flows to wetlands. The installation of fencing and water points on properties are also being funded by the LMD CMA to facilitate strategic grazing in parts of properties where the wetlands exist.

Prior to beginning these works, the LMD CMA seeks to form a management agreement between the landholder of each wetland and the LMD CMA, which covers the required land management actions such as the maintenance of new structures, fencing and fence maintenance, installation of water points, pest animal and weed
control; strategic stock grazing; and monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

Where culverts have been installed in wetland inlets, management actions will also include structure maintenance, gate operation (in the case of regulators) and the recording of the frequency, timing, level, duration and extent of inundation, and the timing of the wetland drying phase.

**Results for one wetland**

One of the project wetlands is a narrow lagoon, approximately 8 km long and 127 hectares in area. Water enters the wetland from the Darling River and from an adjacent wetland, which overflows in large flood events. Some inundation occurs from local runoff as well.

**Field assessments**

Seventy two plant species were recorded at this wetland, which is generally dominated by ‘Black Box woodland’, with scattered ‘Red Gum woodland’. The wetland bed was dry at the time of assessment and was comprised of open forbland, chenopod shrubland and open chenopod shrubland.

Forty animal species were observed: six mammals; 30 birds; and four reptiles.

Indirect evidence of the Short-beaked Echidna was recorded; a number of nocturnal birds were observed, in addition to a number of large raptor nests in the crowns of large River Red Gum trees. Reptiles included the Central Bearded Dragon, South-eastern Morethia Skink, Shingleback Skink and Lace Monitors.

**Objectives**

Wetland objectives were set after the field assessments were carried out. Specific objectives include:

- encouraging regeneration of River Red Gum and Black Box and maintaining adult trees;
- promoting breeding and extended habitation of birds by ensuring favourable water regimes;
- improving native fish passage; and
- minimising carp entry and colonisation.

**Recommended rehabilitation and management actions**

To achieve the objectives for this wetland, recommended rehabilitation and management actions include:
• development of a Rehabilitation Plan (detailling rehabilitation actions, timing, maintenance and cost breakdown);
• replacement of pipes under Low Darling Road with a box culvert (to improve flows and fish passage to the wetland when Darling River flows are adequate) and the installation of a regulator in the feeder channel to the wetland;
• stock fencing to manage access to riparian zones;
• installation of new watering points;
• controlled grazing regimes;
• pest plant and animal control;
• regeneration of native species (post-drought); and
• monitoring, evaluation and reporting to evaluate the performance of rehabilitation works and flow management.

A simplified hydrological-hydraulic model for the wetland was produced (below) to evaluate the water regimes (wetting and drying) that could be achieved with the proposed works and to predict their effectiveness.

Wetland 30,002 begins inundating when flows at Burtundy in the Darling River exceed 21,600 ML/d or when flows in the Murray River exceed 108,000 ML/d at Wentworth (Lock 10). The graphs below indicate how many more times the wetland could receive water following the installation of the new structures, as compared with the number of times it receives water currently.

For further information on this project, contact Kathy Markotis or Sarah Holmes at the LMD CMA.

Murray Wetland Working Group Celebrates!

The winner of a prestigious national environmental award, the NSW Murray Wetlands Working Group, has been encouraged to share its knowledge and experiences with similar groups, in Australia and overseas, also working to better manage and restore rivers and waterways.

‘It inspires me to see the tremendous energy of people working together as you are,’ said Chair of Thiess, Martin Albrecht on Friday, Feb 1 at the Thiess National Riverprize Community Celebration held at the Deniliquin Golf Club.

‘As you go on your journey the things you experience with private landowners, government agencies and everything else, the chances are that somewhere else, not only in Australia but overseas, other people are experiencing the same challenges you’ve got. I think there is a lot of benefit to be had in sharing that knowledge and having a central base where that knowledge is kept so you can draw on it at any time.’

The community celebration, attended by some 80 people was held as a special ‘thankyou’ to all those who contributed to the wetlands working group’s win of the $100,000 Thiess National Riverprize last year. The group is an independent community-based organisation that focuses on wetland rehabilitation and conservation. Since 2000 it has managed two adaptive environmental water allocations on behalf of the NSW Government.

Chair of the group Howard Jones said he was particularly pleased that many of the landholders, who he described as one of the ‘key ingredients of where the group has
gone over the last 10 years’ had come from along the ‘length of the Murray’ to attend the celebration.

Many of the landholders have participated in the groups’ program for environmental watering on private land. (Between 2000 and 2006 181 wetlands on private property in the Murray and Lower Darling Catchments benefited from environmental water.)

Mr Jones praised the landholders for taking up the opportunity the group presented to be involved in the program.

‘You are the people that make the place tick,’ said Mr Jones. ‘We are here to help you.’

Deputy Director General with the Department of Water and Energy David Harriss gave the history of the group from its ‘humble beginnings’ in the late 1980s. He said the outstanding success of the NSW Murray Wetlands Working Group was because it ‘did actually get up and do something’ in terms of improving wetland health.

‘It demonstrated many times it could be done without any adverse impact, in fact having a positive impact, on the social and economic gains of the area,’ Mr Harriss said.

He said one of the most outstanding achievements of the group was how it has been able to engage people and communities.

Invited guest speakers for the evening also included Deniliquin Mayor Cr Lindsay Renwick, Deniliquin elder George Smith, and executive manager of the International Riverfoundation, Amanda Bigelow who described the times we are living in as ‘dynamic.’

‘I think it demands that we have a dynamic response,’ she said. ‘Nature is telling us a lot of things, a lot of things are happening… and it is time for us to be dynamic. A number of people here are ‘stepping’ up to the mark….it is also a great time for innovation which the Murray Wetlands Working Group have shown.’

For more information on the MWWG, contact Paula D’Santos on (03) 5021 9460.

Story and photographs by Margrit Beemster.
A morning touring wetland and horticulture sites, followed by morning tea at the junction of Australia’s two largest rivers, the Darling and Murray, was certainly a stark contrast to the journey into the rangelands of the Lower Murray Darling Catchment via the Arumpo Road en-route to Wamberra and Petro Stations.

The bus carried the Chairs and General Managers of the thirteen Catchment Management Authorities in NSW, many of whom had never ventured into the Western Division of NSW. Board Members of the Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority (CMA) were also on-board to highlight various projects being undertaken in the catchment.

As the date for the bus tour drew nearer Ned and I had become apprehensive about presenting Wamberra to the NSW CMA’s while suffering drought conditions but we decided that it was more important to show the CMA representatives how we, as landholders, manage our properties and livestock under harsh conditions.

As the bus travelled through Tapio Station on its way to Wamberra I gave a commentary on the history of Tapio, once a huge property that covered 600,000 acres and ran 50,000 head of sheep (1870 stock return).

Ben Chaffey purchased Tapio in 1906 and divided it into smaller parcels of land. In 1907 Eli Barnfield purchased the down-sized Tapio section and Sylvester Byrnes bought the Wamberra portion. Both families still own their portions of land today and celebrated 100 years of ownership in March 2007.

While traveling through Wamberra I gave a brief history of the Byrnes family, explained the difficulties of managing properties and livestock during prolonged drought conditions and the management actions that we have adopted.

A lunch break in the Belah Reserve at Wamberra gave everyone a chance to stretch their legs and see first-hand the re-generation that has occurred in this 9,000 acre reserve since it was fenced and permanently de-stocked in 2002. The reserve is one of four private conservation reserves established on Wamberra under the Southern Mallee Regional Guidelines to develop Landuse Agreements to address clearing, cultivation, nature conservation and cultural heritage issues. A part of the LMD CMA Cultural Biodiversity Mapping Project was conducted in the Belah Reserve.

Back on board the bus we travelled past a fence-line and grid that was erected by the eleven indigenous trainees who completed the ‘Certificate 2 in Australian Land Conservation & Restoration’ course at Wamberra in 2002. Ned and I designed the content of the course in conjunction with Sunraysia TAFE.

Our wheat stubbles surprised those from the more secure wheat growing areas to the east. We achieved near average yields this year on very low rainfall and have harvested a crop each year. We sow lightly to allow each plant access to more available soil moisture and use direct drill sowing equipment.
Thick re-growth of woody weeds was evident on areas previously chained for new cropping paddocks and this helped to highlight the need for follow-up control works. A two year cropping rotation is used to control the re-growth economically in developed paddocks.

Before travelling back to Mildura we viewed a water point enclosure on one of Wamberra’s dams that is fitted with a goat trap and also stopped to read a sign we erected on the Arumpo Road, next to a paddock that has been chained. The sign explains the ‘trade-off’ principle, the results achieved on Wamberra and the partners who supported the process.

I felt the tour was a real eye-opener for the CMA representatives who now understand the size of our properties, their productive capacity even under low rainfall and how we adapt to changing circumstances.

Native Grass Workshops

By Angela Higgins, Catchment Officer, Lachlan CMA

Good rainfall in most areas during December and January created the ideal opportunity to view the many varied native grasses in our surrounding district. On Saturday 8 March and Tuesday 18 March the Lachlan Catchment Management Authority coordinated native grass workshops conducted by Peter Milthorpe.

The two days began at 8.30 am and people were encouraged to bring along any native grasses to be identified. Peter then discussed various information regarding native grasses including characteristics for identification, germination properties, longevity of seed and the nutritional benefits to stock.

The next part of the morning involved a demonstration of the Lachlan CMA’s native grass harvester which was carried out along the roadside. Gus Arnott from the Lachlan CMA in Cowra discussed how the brush harvester worked and the benefits of harvesting seed in the local area. Following the harvester demonstration we visited two separate sites where participants broke into small groups and collected as many grass species as possible to be identified.

The final part of the day involved Peter assisting people in identifying the various grass species and sharing his extensive knowledge on our local vegetation. The two days provided a wonderful opportunity for all those involved and hopefully the same opportunity presents itself next season.
Lachlan CMA launches new Conservation Farming Training Package at Field Day

By Kath Mann
Publications and Media Officer, Lachlan CMA

A great crowd was on hand at the Conservation Agriculture Field Day, 21st February, at Condobolin and Lachlan CMA took the opportunity to launch their innovative Conservation Farming Training Package.

An overview of the Training Program was given by John Sutherland, Lachlan CMA Board Member and Chair of the Lachlan Conservation Farming Reference Group. The Program was then officially launched by ABC Country Hour reporter Mr Bruce Reynolds. He was pleased to assist given the obvious interest in such a program and he encouraged the crowd in attendance to visit the Lachlan CMA to find out more.

‘This is a major advancement in conservation farming skills development that aims to help rural producers determine the best options for undertaking conservation farming practices’, Mr Reynolds said.

The Training Package was developed as a result of the Lachlan CMA’s working relationship with landholders through our Land Management Program identifying this need across the catchment. The Lachlan CMA encourage landholders to embrace conservation farming practices to improve natural resources in the Lachlan catchment.

On review of the Program to date there has been 168 (on over 180,000 ha) conventional farming machines converted to allow for less aggressive tillage practices and a need identified for a more integrated approach to reach a larger number of land managers.

The Lachlan CMA has a strong emphasis on training and skill enhancement for land managers and initiated a Conservation Farming reference group to develop the integrated training and extension package.

Lachlan CMA Chairman Robert Gledhill says the reference group approach has been used to ensure Lachlan CMA programs are relevant to their clients. ‘By involving land managers in the development of our services and training packages, we can better service the needs of our Catchment Community’, Mr Gledhill said.

The Conservation Farming Reference group developed the outline for a 12 module training course aimed at providing to the participant the comprehensive detail of all that should be considered in no-till, stubble retention farming.

Workshop manuals were developed in conjunction with Reference Group members.

‘To our knowledge this course is the first to offer this level of detail to landholders who are interested in learning more about conservation farming and improving soil health’, Mr Gledhill announced.

We hope to see you at the Field Day where we will be launching the Conservation Farming Training Package.

To find out more about the Training and how to get involved contact Dominic Nowlan on 6349 1202 or dominic.nowlan@cma.nsw.gov.au.

Learning and development opportunities with Lachlan CMA....

Lachlan CMA provides opportunities for farmers to keep in touch, share ideas and...
learn about initiatives available for them such as field days, bus trips, forums and weekly information updates via email.

Forums and bus trips are organised around topics of significant interest to farmers and community members and are conducted in various locations across the catchment to ensure greater access to these events.

Keep in touch with your local Lachlan CMA office to find out what is happening in your area.

In the Western area Lachlan CMA are supporting another round of TACTICAL GRAZING workshops. So don’t miss out on these as places will be fully sponsored by Lachlan CMA.

The Workshops will be conducted by Peter Jessop and a team of NSW DPI Rangelands staff and locations will be negotiated based on demand.

The workshops are comprehensive, with a practical outdoor focus and are conducted over 2 days with participants receiving a copy of *The Glovebox Guide to Tactical Grazing Management for Semi-Arid Woodlands*. Contact the Hillston Lachlan CMA Office now to register your interest!

Ph: (02) 6967 2897.

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**Elders and NPWS renew Kinchega MOU**

The Menindee Elders Council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) have renewed for the third time, a formal agreement to work together in looking after Kinchega National Park.

Menindee Elders, including Isobel Bennett and Evelyn Bates said that the Park was very important to local Barkindji and Nyiampaa people, containing significant occupation sites and burials more than 13,000 years old.

‘This agreement recognises all the people here working together to protect the environment of Kinchega and our cultural heritage,’ Isobel Bennet said.

Signed on behalf of the Department of Environment and Climate Change, the Head of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Sally Barnes said the renewal of a memorandum of understanding with the Menindee Elders Council recognised the essential contribution of traditional owners in managing this national park.

‘The memorandum of understanding formalises a process to enable Elders with ties to the park to have real and meaningful involvement in its management.

‘The first MOU was signed July 2002 and has seen many important projects come to fruition including site identification, burial protection works, community consultation, assistance with park management and natural resource management issues, delivering discovery programs and employment opportunities.

‘Under the agreement the Elders Council has a formal role in assisting NPWS in the protection, management and interpretation of Aboriginal cultural sites within Kinchega National Park and the Menindee area.

‘The knowledge of the Elders Council has been crucial in looking after cultural aspects, but the agreement also involves consultation on general park management as well.

‘With water now returning to the Menindee Lakes system, the spotlight is back on the park and the renewal of this agreement is a good opportunity to remind people of the importance of the area to Aboriginal people’, Ms Barnes said.
‘Embracing change’ in Life and Light photo competition

By Maree Barnes, Communications Officer, Western CMA

Western Catchment shutterbugs are encouraged to enter the 2008 ‘Life & Light in the Western Catchment’ Photographic Competition by its July 11 deadline.

This is the competition’s eleventh year and its theme is ‘Embracing Change’. It is free to enter and open to anyone, including children, whose photograph is taken within the Western Catchment.

This year’s theme reflects the changeable nature of far-western NSW and people’s ability to adapt to changes.

Some parts of our Catchment have enjoyed significant rainfall for the first time in seven years and the country has changed dramatically. It has sprung back to life and we expect that many people have taken photographs that celebrate those improvements.

People in the far-west of the Catchment who are still very much drought-affected have had to be responsive to the continuing effects of dry times, which can also be shown in their photographs.

The theme also recognises the ability of people to embrace change in the way they manage our natural resources: the land, water, vegetation and the variety of plants and animals in the Catchment.

This may include stocking to conditions, managing weed and animal pests, fencing their waterways or converting machinery to minimum till,” Ms Barnes said.

The theme is shared by the Western Catchment Landcare Forum, which will be held in White Cliffs during August, and will feature a range of speakers and activities focused on changes occurring in the semi-arid rangelands of NSW. An exhibition of the winning photographs is planned for the Forum.

The competition has four sections: open colour, open black and white, secondary student (colour or black and white) and primary student (colour or black and white).

Entry to the competition is free and people can enter as many photographs as they would like. Entries will be accepted until July 11.

Photographs, including digital images, should be supplied as a 10 x 15 cm print. Digital photographs must also be supplied on a CD. Photographs of recognisable people should include a completed consent to use form, which is included in the entry information pack.

Photographs should have been taken no earlier than 2006, must be unpublished and should not have won any other competition.

A panel of judges will assess each entry on its composition, suitability to theme, focus or sharpness of image, exposure and creativity.

Winners receive cash prizes of $250 for first place and $50 for runners-up. Many entries are used in Western CMA.

Cathy Finlayson of Bokhara Hut, Brewarrina, is ready to start snapping in the 2008 Life and Light in the Western Catchment Photographic Competition.
promotional material, so photographs may be seen by thousands of people.

Information packages, including entry & consent to use image forms are available at Western CMA and local council offices, by visiting www.western.cma.nsw.gov.au, calling 1800 032 101 or emailing western@cma.nsw.gov.au.

In 2007, The Light and Life of the Western Catchment Commemorative Screensaver, which features a selection of 115 photographs submitted to the competition over the previous ten years was produced.

To view the images from the screensaver or to see the winning photographs from the past three year’s competitions, visit the Western CMA’s website. The screensaver is available free of charge by ringing the Western CMA on 1800 032 101.

‘Bird on a Wire’ by Sheree Bamforth, Cobar, 2006

‘In the Creek’ by Debbie Symonds, Broken Hill 2007

‘Mud Bashin’ by Debbie Symonds, Broken Hill, 2007

‘Tree Hug’ by Sheree Bamforth, Cobar, 2006

‘Regeneration’ by Barbara Gough of Broken Hill, 2007
Vigilance needed on Invasive Native Scrub seedling growth

By Rod Campbell
Central West CMA, Dubbo

While the recent wet summer months have proved a windfall for landholders in some parts of the Western Division, these conditions could also open the door to the next wave of Invasive Native Scrub (INS) growth.

Mass germinations of various INS species have been noticed in some areas due to the recent wet summer, particularly where soils have remained moist for some time.

History suggests that these plants could survive to be the next wave of woody thickening on western landscapes, according to Western Catchment Management Authority (CMA) General Manager, Daryl Green.

‘The summer rains have been ideal for the germination of certain INS species, such as hopbush, turpentine, budda, mulga and punty bush,’ said Daryl.

‘The conditions that favour INS seedling growth are a wet first summer with no extended hot dry periods, followed by a wet second summer to establish.

‘The recent pattern of weather suggests that this is a real possibility.’

Land managers will need to start observing scrub seedling growth and considering how they will respond.

‘Seedlings of these species are very difficult to see in the pasture. You don’t notice them until you get ‘your eye in’, and then you see them everywhere.

‘I’d encourage landholders to consider their management options in controlling this seedling growth. The main options are burning, using goat browsing and maintaining perennial groundcover to ensure competition.’

There is a window of opportunity to effectively manage this growth. Generally landholders will need to control seedling growth within two years, before the plants develop a woody base.

After then, control will be harder and typically involved more expensive management options.

The Western and Central West CMAs recognise the value of providing information and advice to help land managers control this seedling growth in the early stages to prevent further INS spreading and thickening.

Together they are hosting regional workshops across INS affected areas during the week starting 12 May to raise awareness of the issue of INS seedling growth and provide information on seedling identification and the management options available.

For further information about these workshops, please contact Rod Campbell on (02) 6881 3430 or rodney.campbell@cma.nsw.gov.au.
The twelfth meeting of the Western Lands Advisory Council was held at Cobar on 26th February 2008

The members of the Advisory Council met in Cobar on the 26th of February 2008 and the following matters were discussed and dealt with.

The Chair, Jenny McLellan, who has been reappointed, at the commencement of the meeting welcomed three new members were recently appointed to the Advisory Council, those being Jim Maynard representing the Western Division Council of the NSW Farmers Association, Greg Markwick representing the Minister for Agriculture and Mark Peacock representing the Minister for the Environment. The rest of the members were reappointed for the next three years and those are: Dr Beryl Carmichael representing Aboriginal Interests, James Morris representing the Western Division Council of the NSW Farmers Association, Clrs Wayne O’Mally and Clive Linnett AFSM-OAM representing the Western Division Group of the Shires Association of NSW, Rory Treweeke representing the Catchment Management Authorities, Ken Turner representing the Pastoralists’ Association of West Darling, Peter Ponder as an Independent Lessee and Geoff Woods as Western Lands Commissioner. There are still two vacancies, those being another Aboriginal representative and a person representing conservation interests.

The Advisory Council responded to the Issues Paper on the Review of the Western Lands Act, 1901 and the members requested the Minister for Lands, Hon Tony Kelly, MLC and the Department of Lands give urgent consideration to enabling the freeholding of grazing Western Lands Leases in the Review. The Advisory Council recognises that land must still be environmentally sustainable, but it is felt that landholders should be able to undertake diversification and should be encouraged to do so.

On the matter of Wild Dog Management and access to the Wild Dog Fence through Sturt National Park, the Advisory Council supports the suggestion from the Wild Dog Destruction Board for a 100 metre strip to be excised from the National Park and reserved under the Crown Lands Act 1989 with the Wild Dog Destruction Board as Trust Manager. This would enable the Wild Dog Destruction Board to access the Wild Dog Fence anywhere in the Western Division. For some years the Wild Dog Destruction Board has been negotiating with the National Parks and Wildlife Service to gain access to the Wild Dog Fence within Sturt National Park for access and to allow maintenance and upgrading of the Fence. The Wild Dog Destruction Board is still having problems with the ‘extractive industry’ works within the National Park. The Wild Dog Destruction Board extracts clay for use in the stabilisation and repair of the Wild Dog Fence and this contravenes the National Parks Act.

The Advisory Council members have requested that the Boundary Fencing matter be given a high priority in the Review of the Western Lands Act 1901, now that it is going to be dealt with within the Review and not as a separate matter as was first indicated to the Advisory Council.

The Advisory Council supports that the functions of the Western Lands Commissioner are not to be diminished in any way. We also support the retention of the Local Land Boards with a five year term for members.

On the proposed windfarm project at Silverton, the Advisory Council has written to the Minister for Lands, Hon Tony Kelly, MLC strongly objecting to the current and
any future projects of State significance that are planned to be developed whereby the lessees involved in the proposed windfarm at Silverton have been excluded from the process of negotiations and the opportunity to change their grazing leases to cater for diversification in their enterprises.

The Advisory Council has been advised that there are about 500 turbines to be erected that will affect four properties. The Council was also advised that there is a certain amount of dismay at the manner in which the lessees were advised of the ‘resumption’ of their leased lands by the Department of Lands personnel. The Advisory Council are requesting that this proposal be revisited and consideration be given to how this project is planned and developed so there are positive outcomes for all concerned.

The Advisory Council is aware that Western Lands grazing leases, upon application, can have the lease purpose changed to suit developments such as tourism. Further, the Western Lands Act could be amended in that part of the Act relating to ‘rent’ by changing the words ‘intensive agriculture’ to ‘intensive industries’. A change of lease purpose under the Western Lands Act is consistent with established practices for over 100 years, and the change of lease purpose would be the simplest, quickest and fairest solution to allow the proposed windfarm to proceed.

The Advisory Council has been made aware that the Government intends to compulsorily withdraw those portions of the leases on which the windfarm is proposed to be located and classify the land tenure as some form of Crown lease. The argument being that this form of lease is secure. In other words, a Western Lands Lease is not secure even though the leases to be affected are leases in perpetuity. The Government’s proposal of compulsory resumption totally devalues all Western Lands Leases. At all times, Western Lands grazing lessees must have equity in their leases and the leases remain as leases in perpetuity as they have done for the past 100 years.

On the very serious problem in the Ledknapper region of the escalation of wild dogs in the north-east section of the Bourke Rural Lands Protection Board, the Advisory Council has written to the Hon Verity Firth, Minister for the Environment requesting funds and resources be made available for an urgent aerial baiting program of 10-80 baits to be undertaken to try and do a large scale aerial control program. The Ledknapper Wild Dog Action Group was formed to try and co-ordinate a strategic plan in order to manage the very serious, escalating problem of these wild dogs and stop the stock losses they are experiencing which are increasing. There needs to be funds made available to implement a long-term, broad scale control program by aerial baiting and for suitable staff to be available that are trained in distributing 10-80 aerial baits.

The Advisory Council is aware that the Kangaroo Management Program Board has made a decision to stop the granting of any further kangaroo trapper licences and the Advisory Council has suggested that new trapper licences be restricted to the zones where there is a surplus of quotas.

The Council is also aware that the Program does not allow the on-selling of any trapper licences so this leaves the industry with a declining number of shooters at a time when the kangaroo population, it is felt, will rapidly expand due to the recent rainfalls. There has been a gradual uptake of licences by landholders where there are limited or unsatisfactory shooters, but this decision to stop the granting of any new licences means landholders have lost the ability to have the shooter of his/her choice and this is felt to be most unsatisfactory.

The Advisory Council has written to the Minister for Lands, Hon Tony Kelly, MLC requesting that the 2008/09 grazing rents on Western Lands Leases be waived again due to this severe drought continuing in a number of areas. Also, remembering that where it has rained, it does not rain finances and many landholders are
still experiencing financial difficulties. The landholders have expressed much appreciation for the waiving of the rents for the past seven years, as it has been of great assistance to them.

Holders of Western Lands Leases for ‘grazing’ purposes are required to hold a Cultivation Permit before they can cultivate any part of their lease. The majority of Cultivation Permits are for Dryland Cultivation and are usually for a period of 10 years. At the end of the 10 year period the lessee is invited to apply to renew the Cultivation Permit for a further period, (again usually for a period of 10 years). The current cost of renewing a Cultivation Permit is $529.00. To review a permit requires quite a few resources and the Department, like many others, has limited resources. It was recognised that there was a need to improve the administration processes. Streamlining the Change of Lease Purpose process and using technological improvements to determine if there have been any breaches of the Cultivation Permit conditions has resulted in the majority of Cultivation Permits not being renewed and the grazing lease being ‘changed’ to a grazing and cultivation lease.

By choosing to change the purpose of a ‘grazing’ lease to a ‘grazing and cultivation’ lease, the lessee has a lower application fee, (currently $160.00), does not have to renew the permits and has the capacity of being able to cultivate land whenever the season allows.

On the Legal Road Network Project there have been 4 plans lodged at LPINSW, (about 600 km). The fifth and sixth Plans are in production regarding Border Downs Road, Hawkers Gate Road, Milparinka Road and the Silver City Highway to the Queensland border. They are going to be by electronic lodgement of Plans using ‘ePlan’ which will be the way in the future.

Legal advice from LPINSW is that the Department of Lands can record easements on title without producing Certificates of Title or getting mortgagees consent. This will save the Project a great deal of time and money.

The next meeting of the Western Lands Advisory Council is to be held in Cobar on the 10th of June 2008.

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**Legal Road Network Project**

The project is progressing steadily and we have now completed the Silver City Highway from Broken Hill to the Queensland border and the Hawkers Gate Road area representing another 430 km of public road identified on deposited plans. This now represents approximately 1000 km of public road that has been dealt with by our project and is a significant milestone.

The project has now moved to complete the North West corner of the Unincorporated area and lessees who utilise the Cameron Corner Road, Hewart Downs Road, Toona Gate Road, Waka Road, Pimpara Lake Road and Mount Shannon Road should have received or should soon be receiving paperwork outlining the process for our project and any action required. Landholders that use these roads as primary access and have not received any paperwork should contact us as soon as possible.

In March, Rex attended the Western Division Rural Lands Protection Boards conference in Tibooburra and had productive discussion with the participants.

Landholders are reminded that to enable the project to progress to program it is imperative that responses to our requests for completion of application forms for the creation of easements and removal of access conditions is timely. If those applications are not forthcoming it may result in the opportunity for an easement to a landlocked property being missed. It will not be possible for the project to revisit these areas and any creation of easements in the future would be at the landholder’s expense.

We look forward to your continued support so that an effective legal access system can be achieved in the Western Division.
To the Landholder

Western Division Newsletter

The editor of the WDN welcomes contributions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue No.</th>
<th>Deadline for articles</th>
<th>Send articles to:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td>Jul–Aug</td>
<td>2 June 2008 Sally Ware, NSW DPI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>Sep–Oct</td>
<td>1 August 2008 PO Box 393, Hay 2711</td>
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<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>Nov–Feb</td>
<td>1 October 2008 Fax: (02) 6993 2177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>Mar–Apr</td>
<td>2 February 2009 Phone: (02) 6993 1608</td>
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<tr>
<td>127</td>
<td>May–Jun</td>
<td>1 April 2009 Email: <a href="mailto:sally.ware@dpi.nsw.gov.au">sally.ware@dpi.nsw.gov.au</a></td>
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