The Hicks family at their “Charlton” wetland near Lowesdale: Murray Wetland Carbon Storage Round 1 Investment Program recipients
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All images taken by MDWWG staff, unless advised.

*Grey sunray (Rhodanthe corymbiflora)*

*Smooth Darling Pea (Swainsona galegifolia)*
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our Vision:
Community understanding, caring and rehabilitation of wetland environments.

Our Mission:
Restoring wetlands of the Murray-Darling Basin and improving the management of wetlands throughout the catchment by linking community involvement with best scientific understanding.

Our Values:
- **INNOVATION** – creative thinking encourages opportunities.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY** - responsible and open decision making and sound financial management.
- **EQUITY** - appreciation of environmental, social and economic situations across the Murray-Darling Basin.
- **INTEGRITY** - responsive and reliable in all our actions and respectful of community opinions and issues.
- **COMMUNITY FOCUSED** - engaging and empowering our communities in environmental solutions.
- **COMMITMENT** – a community based organisation committed to wetland restoration.

Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Ltd. (MDWWG) is a not-for-profit organisation registered under the Australian Securities and Investments Commission as a charity. It has a Board of Directors and members from the wider community, including scientists, landholders and conservationists. It has Deductible Gift Recipient Status and is registered on the Australian Commonwealth Government Register of Environmental Organisations.

Our Organisational Chart is depicted on the following page.
Board of Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Ltd.
Mr Howard Jones, Chair
Mrs Judy Frankenberg, Deputy Chair
Mr Barrie MacMillan, Company Secretary
Mr Roger Good
Ms Kathy Ridge
Dr Ben Gawne
Mr Vin Byrnes, retired 23 October 2013
Mr Ian Davidson, appointed 23 October 2013

Staff
Chief Executive Officer: Dr Deborah Nias (based in Adelaide)
Program Manager: Ms Rhonda Sinclair (based in Albury-Wodonga)
Project Officer: Mrs Sarah Ning (based in Albury-Wodonga)

ABN
50 137 010 658

Registered Business Office
491 Smollett Street Albury NSW 2640

Auditor
Mr Dougal Frederick

Postal Address
PO Box 7016 East Albury NSW 2640

Insurance Policies
Association Liability Insurance (Vero Insurance), Voluntary Workers Insurance (ACE Australia) and Public Liability Insurance (CGU Vertex)

Directors Meetings
Four Director meetings and an Annual General Meeting were held during 2012–2013. Teleconferences were held on 5 August 2013, 20 January and 5 May 2014 and one face-to-face meeting was held on 23 October 2013 at Albury (NSW), the same day as the AGM.

A Strategic Planning Workshop was convened in Mildura on 7 and 8 April 2014 to prepare the MDWWG Strategic Plan 2014–2017, which we shall report against in the 2014–2015 Annual Report.
Our Conservation Goals:

- Promote and implement ecologically sound management of Murray-Darling Basin wetlands to optimise their environmental values.
- Promote the sustainable utilisation of wetlands and water resources.

Specifically, we shall restore and improve the ecological health of floodplain wetlands along the southern Murray-Darling Basin, including the headwaters of the Great Dividing Range; the floodplains and the rain fed wetlands (not connected to rivers).

We shall do this through:

- Facilitating greater community awareness of wetland values and management requirements in the Murray-Darling Basin wetlands.
- Utilising the latest research and best management practices to protect and restore Murray-Darling Basin wetlands.
- Developing functional links with other wetland and river management organisations.
- Developing direct community involvement in cooperative rehabilitation projects for the Murray-Darling Basin wetlands in cooperation with government agencies and key land managers.
- Identifying sources of funding and seeking sponsorship for implementing wetland programs in the Murray-Darling Basin wetlands.
- Promoting management-oriented research and recognition of research priorities for the Murray-Darling Basin wetlands throughout the Murray, Murrumbidgee and lower Darling River catchments.
- Expanding interstate liaison and cooperation by fostering links with other agencies and wetland rehabilitation organisations.
- Recognising the importance of local and regional landscape management and private wetlands, by taking a systems approach.

Lake Benanee, NSW
Dear Members

This past year has seen many highlights as we strive to improve our long-term sustainability and viability. On-going projects and relationships with the now Local Land Services in the Murray and Western regions have helped improve wetland management and provided environmental flows into Fletchers Creek. The project with the Barkindji Maraura Elders Environment Team (BMEET) has been a real highlight for me, as it shows what can happen with a little bit of foresight, enthusiasm and determination. This project has received a great deal of attention, locally, nationally and internationally as we all come to grips with what cultural flows are and how to engage Aboriginal people in a meaningful and constructive way.

Another highlight is the new website, Riverspace. This is a great initiative in conjunction with the Australian River Restoration Centre and already is showing the benefits of truly integrating across borders and boundaries. I highly commend Deborah and Siwan for turning this idea into a reality.

Earlier in the year, we went through a new strategic planning process and have now developed a new four year vision. As always, we remain focussed on delivery of projects that are based on sound science and community engagement. We also look to the future for partnerships with other organisations as we see our future in a very positive light. Our current relationships with government and other agencies shows the benefits in long-term strategic thinking for wetland and river management.

During the year, we also acquired the Nature Conservation Water Fund Pty Ltd from Nature Conservation Trust of NSW. We hope to use this Trust in the future to receive water donations to apply to wetlands and is part of a long-term strategy to secure the financial sustainability of the group.

Sadly, one of our longest serving members and close personal friend, Vin Byrnes, passed away on 16 July 2014. Part of this group and the former Murray Wetlands Working Group Inc., Vin was a dedicated and passionate member, who knew his rivers and wetlands and wasn’t afraid to tell it how it is. Our sincerest sympathies to his family and all who knew him.

Howard Jones (Chair)
2.0 MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2013-2014

EXTERNALLY FUNDED PROJECTS

✔ Continuation of the two-year partnership project *Murray Wetland Carbon Storage* to improve carbon storage in wetlands, project being managed by the Murray Local Land Services with funding provided by the Australian Government Biodiversity Fund.

✔ Finalised partnership project with the former Lower Murray Darling CMA (now Western Local Land Services) on the Carrs, Cappitts and Bunberoo Creeks system project engineering options of the system to improve water management for environmental purposes.

✔ Finalisation of a partnership project with the former Lower Murray Darling CMA (now Western Local Land Services) investigating future options for potential water regime options and management of Bottle Bend.

✔ Finalisation of a partnership project with Western Local Land Services to investigate the project and planning approvals for the Carrs, Cappitts and Bunberoo Creeks system: 2013/14 Project Delivery 2014/15 (June 2014).

INTERNALLY FUNDED PROJECTS

✔ Partnership project with the Barkindji Maraura Elders Environment Team to deliver environmental water to Fletchers Creek, the first substantial flow into this creek for nearly four decades. Fact Sheet and Video produced.

✔ Riverspace............ a place for wetlands, rivers and people

In mid-July we were delighted to launch a new website Riverspace, a joint initiative with the Australian River Restoration Centre. This website was created as a space for people to share knowledge about our fabulous rivers and wetlands. Riverspace is independent and staffed by a professional and experienced science communication team, using a Google map interface. Riverspace is inclusive, dynamic and designed to grow. It is affordable, providing self-managed options through to a full management service where we will manage your content, create your project pages and make your work look fabulous. Become part of the Riverspace community by visiting the website and seeing how you can reach a wider audience. Riverspace is for on-ground projects, oral histories, recreation and other topics that link people to our rivers and wetlands. By signing up to Riverspace, you are instantly taking the lead on ensuring your work reaches a wider audience. View the Riverspace website at: [www.riverspace.com.au](http://www.riverspace.com.au)
PROPOSALS and GRANTS

✓ During 2013-2014, six proposals/grants were submitted with four being successful and two unsuccessful:
  
  • Review Wetland Management Plans Riverine Recovery Project; submitted to SA Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (unsuccessful).
  
  • Project and Planning approvals for the Carrs, Cappitts and Bunberoo Creeks system: 2013/14 Project Delivery; submitted to Western Local Land Services (successful).
  
  • Interim partnership arrangements for Murray Carbon Storage project 2014-2015; submitted to Murray Local Land Services (successful).
  
  • Wetlands Watch Monitoring Guide for landholders and community groups New South Wales Environmental Trust | Environmental Education Program | Express of Interest (unsuccessful).
  
  • Grants to Voluntary Environment, Sustainability and Heritage Organisations 2013-14 submitted to Department of the Environment (formerly the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water Population and Communities) (successful).
  

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

✓ Visit and tour of wetlands by The Nature Conservancy, USA (Brian Richter) and Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (David Papps) (4 to 13 December).

✓ Reconvened Carrs, Cappitts and Bunberoo Creeks system Project Steering Committee (four meetings).
✓ Murray Wetland Carbon Storage project
  • Project Steering Committee meetings (17 July, 17 October, 17 January and 12 March)
  • Project Team meeting (13 August)
✓ Murray Wetland Carbon Project Review and Strategic Planning Workshop (19 and 20 May).
✓ CEO member of the MDBA Strategic Thinkers Group.
✓ CEO member of Water Advisory Committee Nature Conservation Foundation SA.
✓ Chair member of the MDBA Basin Communities Committee.
✓ Chair and Deputy Chair members of the NSW Murray Lower Darling Environmental Water Advisory Group.
✓ Chair and Company Secretary members of the Chowilla Reference Group.
✓ CEO 2014 Chair of Australian Riverprize judging panel.
✓ CEO member of 17th International Riversymposium Program Committee.
✓ CEO member of the RiverSmart Advisory Board.

COMMUNICATION AND PUBLICITY
✓ Communication Plan completed.
✓ Media Hits

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✓ Facebook updates and publicity (465 likes) [https://www.facebook.com/pages/Murray-Darling-Wetlands-Working-Group/139994559394028]
Website updates [www.murraydarlingwetlands.com.au]

During the reporting period, the MDWWG website had an average of 1140 pageviews per month, with the top pages viewed being Murray-Darling Basin – Quick Facts and Restoring the wetlands of the Murray-Darling Basin. People from 73 countries viewed the website across 5700 sessions, with 84% viewed by Australian’s.

- 2012-2013 Annual Report uploaded to MDWWG website.
- 2013 Annual General Meeting Highlights compiled and uploaded to MDWWG website and Members advised via email.
- Attended launch of Wetland Birds of the Central Riverina, New South Wales: An Identification and Habitat Management Guide (sponsored by Murray CMA, Corowa Shire and MDWWG).
- Sponsored updated pages on Murray River Access guides.

WORKSHOPS, CONFERENCES and TRAINING

- Manual Handling Course (23 July).
- Planting in and around Dams and Wetlands Workshop (2 August).
- Native Vegetation Property Vegetation Planning Part 1 Training (5 to 9 August).
- Corroboree Frog Display Opening (14 August).
- Evening Open Air, La Trobe University Open Day (30 August).
- Fundraising Made Easy (25 September).
- Yarrawonga/Mulwala Agricultural Show (5 October).
- Mainstream Environmental Water Law and Practice workshop (14 October).
- Australian Institute of Company Directors, Company Directors Course (5 November to 29 January).
- 6th Annual Water Forum, La Trobe University (7 November).
- Indigenous Use of Fire Forum, Kiewa Catchment Landcare Groups in conjunction with North East Catchment Management Authority, La Trobe University (20 November).
- Reforming Aboriginal cultural heritage legislation in NSW (4 February).
- Carp-O-Mania: The Great Carp Carnival (30 March).
- Rotary Murray Darling School of Freshwater Research (12 to 17 April).
- Water Trust Alliance: Australian Environmental Watering: Successes, Improvements and Agenda to 2019 (3 June).
- Soil Health – How to Build Soil Carbon Field Day (17 June).
- Joint Australian Society for Fish Biology and the Australian Society for Limnology (30 June to 3 July).
PUBLIC LECTURES and FIELD TRIPS

✔ Tour of Lake Urana with Murray CMA, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage and Urana Shire staff (19 August).
✔ Murray-Darling Basin Seminar Series, Charles Sturt University (18 September).
✔ Attended public lecture by Dr Michael Looker, Director Australian Division, The Nature Conservancy (1 October).
✔ Directors and Staff site visits to wetlands around Albury/Corowa area (22 October).
✔ Murray-Darling Basin Seminar Series, La Trobe University (28 October).
✔ Attended public lecture by Dr Neil Barr, Social Researcher with the Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries (6 November).
✔ Visit and tour of Sunraysia wetlands by The Nature Conservancy, USA (Brian Richter) and Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (David Papps) (4 to 13 December).
✔ Tour of Lower Murrumbidgee and Murray floodplains with MDBA Basin Communities Committee, Commissioners and Sam Archer (Chair, Riverina LLS).
✔ Know your soils – learn 10 practical steps Holbrook Landcare Network National Environment Centre (4 April).
✔ Tour of Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth wetlands (27 May).

COMPANY ADMINISTRATION

➢ Transfer of Water Access Licence from Murray Wetlands Working Group Inc. to Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Ltd.
➢ Finance, Audit and Risk Committee established.
➢ Governance, Remuneration and Nomination Committee established.

STAFFING and HR

✔ Completed staff Employment Agreements.
✔ Completed staff Annual Performance Reviews.
3.0 REPORT ON STRATEGIC PLAN


The 2011-2014 Strategic Plan sets out three main goals:

1. COORDINATING/MANAGING WETLANDS RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT - We aim to improve the condition and status of Murray-Darling Basin wetlands.
2. OUR INNOVATION FOCUS - We will maintain and further develop our innovation focus.
3. OUR ORGANISATION - We will continue to be an effective and viable organisation.

GOAL 1

COORDINATING/MANAGING WETLANDS RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT

We aim to improve the condition and status of Murray-Darling Basin wetlands

Develop mutually beneficial alliances to assist in project identification.

✓ Two project partnerships continued: Western LLS Project and Planning Approvals for the Carrs, Cappitts and Bunberoo Creeks system: 2013/14 Project Delivery and Murray LLS Murray Wetland Carbon Storage project.

✓ The Fletchers Creek 2013/14 environmental watering project was a collaborative project between the Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group Ltd. (MDWWG) and the Barkindji Maraura Elders Environment Team (BMEET), in conjunction with the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH); The Murray-Darling Freshwater Research Centre (MDFRC) and the NSW Office of Water (NOW).

Implement a minimum of three (3) projects within the 3 year strategic planning period.

✓ Carrs, Cappitts and Bunberoo Creeks system partnership project with the former Lower Murray Darling CMA (now Western LLS) to investigate engineering options.

✓ Carrs, Cappitts and Bunberoo Creeks system partnership project with now Western LLS to investigate project and planning approvals.

✓ Bottle Bend Future Options study, in partnership with former Murray CMA (now Murray LLS) to investigate potential water regime options and management of Bottle Bend.
Business Plan prepared for NSW Government Office of Water for submission to former DSEWPaC (now Department of the Environment) on *Locks 8 and 9 Weir Pool Manipulation Plan: incorporating the Carrs, Cappitts and Bunberoo Creeks system*.

Continuation of a two-year project to improve carbon storage in wetlands, project to be managed by Murray LLS with funding provided by the Australian Government Biodiversity Fund.

Wayne Duman and MDWWG Project Officer, Sarah Ning at "Morundah Station", near Morundah: Murray Wetland Carbon Storage Round 1 Investment Program recipient

**Develop a business model to deliver improved wetland management across the Murray-Darling Basin.**

MDWWG will need to have a mix of funding options including:

1. Project funds for wetland restoration projects sought through Government funding bodies.
2. Project funds for wetland restoration projects sought through partnerships with Government agencies.
3. Consultancies, where appropriate.
5. Donations.
7. Use of assets, such as pumps, for hire.
Significant sponsorship gained from Mallee CMA, former Murray and Murrumbidgee CMAs (now Murray and Riverina Local Land Services) and MDFRC for reprint of third edition of *Wetlands Watch: Field Guide for Monitoring Wetlands in the southern Murray-Darling Basin*.

**GOAL 2**

**OUR INNOVATION FOCUS**

*We will maintain and further develop our innovation focus*

**MDWWG assume a leading and proactive role in the Water Trust Alliance.**

- Participated in Water Trust Alliance workshop supported by the MDBA and coordinated by Healthy Rivers Australia: *Australian Environmental Watering: Successes, Improvements and Agenda to 2019* (3 June).

**Develop and implement an innovative and flexible community engagement strategy/plan.**

- Communication Plan produced.
- Facebook page operational.
- Website maintained.

*The very diverse Yoroobla Centre wetland on Richard Simpson’s property “Boongara”, near Jerilderie: Murray Wetland Carbon Storage Round 1 Investment Program recipient*
Actively promote the skills and expertise of the Water Trust Alliance.

- Water Trust Alliance information available on website.
- Liaison with Healthy Rivers Australia regarding future workshop opportunities to consider next steps in development of Water Trusts.
- Water Trust Alliance Workshop held in Canberra on 3 June 2014.

GOAL 3

OUR ORGANISATION

We will continue to be an effective and viable organisation

Undertake annual reviews of operational arrangements and key achievements.

- 2012-2013 Annual Report written, distributed and available on website.
- Two Committees formed: Governance, Remuneration and Nomination (GRN) Committee and Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee.

Determine annually a cash budget for the financial year ahead and compare actuals against budget.

- Developed for 2013-2014 financial year.
Establish simple and transparent succession planning processes for Board/staff.

- Governance, Remuneration and Nomination Committee established and staff structure implemented.
- Board Review undertaken in April 2014.

Develop and implement a professional development plan for Board and staff.

- Staff development plan template finalised.
- Board involved in self-assessment and identifying development needs via Leonie Burrows.

Development and implement a Risk Management Plan and undertake annual reviews of this plan.

- As part of the Strategic Planning Workshop convened in Mildura on 7 and 8 April 2014 (facilitated by Leonie Burrows), a Risk Management Plan for July 2014 to June 2015 was devised.

Investigate and implement an effective and cost-efficient asset utilisation strategy.

- Asset Register compiled and maintained.

Investigate opportunities for development of a consulting arm for MDWWG.

- Consultancy companies approaching MDWWG to work on projects in the lower Murray CMA region; one successful project implemented.
- No further plans to develop a consulting arm.

Develop and implement a policy for fee for information and advice services.

- Pricing structure established by Remuneration Committee but requires review.

Investigate the implementation of a MDWWG Environmental Water Fund.

- Acquisition of the Nature Conservation Water Fund Pty Ltd.

4.0 CONTACT

For further information, please contact:

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