**A LANDCARE SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR THE RIVERINA REGION (a position paper)**

On September 2, a major announcement was made at the 2015 Landcare and LLS Conference in Orange by the Hon. Niall Blair (Minister for Primary Industries; Minister for Land and Water) concerning the NSW Government’s allocation of $15M over 4 years towards the joint Landcare NSW-LLS **Landcare Support Program**. Information on this program at the State level is available on the websites of Landcare NSW (<http://www.landcarensw.org.au/local-landcare-coordinator-initiative.php>) and LLS (<http://www.lls.nsw.gov.au/about-lls/partnerships>). An MOU – also available on the websites – was co-signed by Mr Rob Dulhunty (Chair, Landcare NSW) and Ms Alex Anthony (A/Chair of Chairs, LLS).

Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc. (MLi - <http://murrumbidgeelandcare.asn.au/>) has actively consulted with LachLandcare (LLi) and Riverina LLS about the development of a **Riverina Landcare Support Program**. The concept of a coordinated program bid was endorsed this week by Mr Tom Stacy, Chair of MLi (representing MLi and LLi) and Mr Rob Kelly, GM of Riverina LLS. This document begins the process of consultation with Landcare, industry and community groups around the Riverina Region.

In the Riverina, a primary goal will be building institutional collaboration, community capacity and connections within local communities to produce on-ground change in attitudes and activities that advance the natural environment and its potential synergy with sustainable agriculture.

The Landcare Support Program in the Riverina will be based on the needs, gaps, opportunities and ideas identified by Landcare networks, groups and individuals; current stakeholders (MLi, LachLandcare, Riverina LLS); potential stakeholders (e.g., Farmlink, Ricegrowers Association, Cottongrowers, Graham Centre, local government etc.); and the principles of efficiency, effectiveness and equity. The Regional Landcare Facilitators (Bindi Vanzella and Dick Green, selected and appointed in late August) are the main points of contact for people who wish to suggest needs, gaps, opportunities and ideas (Table 1).

**Community consultation meetings**, hosted by MLi and Riverina LLS will be held on **Wednesday October 7 at Griffith (930 am) and Temora (2pm)** to: (1) discuss the NSW program and the Riverina response; (2) identify potential regional alliances and issues; and (3) plan the steps necessary to develop, monitor and produce a coordinated Riverina response.

**Table 1. Suggested communication pathways for the design and implementation of the Riverina Landcare Support Program.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Functions** | **MLi, LLi** | **Riverina LLS** |
| Decisions, sign-off | Tom Stacy, Chair, MLi  Charlie Arnott,Chair, LLi | Rob Kelly, GM, Riverina LLS |
| Alliance building, strategies | Ted Wolfe, MLi  [twolfe@csu.edu.au](mailto:twolfe@csu.edu.au), 0401 753 786 | Mike Dunn, Riverina LLS  [michael.dunn@lls.nsw.gov.au](mailto:michael.dunn@lls.nsw.gov.au), 026923 6342 |
| Contacts for public, staff, clients and community | Bindi Vanzella (0.6 RLF, Riverina), Dick Green (0.4 RLF, Riverina)  [bvanzella@mli.org.au](mailto:bvanzella@mli.org.au) 0427 753 786; [dgreen@mli.org.au](mailto:dgreen@mli.org.au) 0487 953 777 | |
| Additional inputs and consultation | Landcare NSW, LLS  Landcare groups and networks in the Riverina  MLi staff (e.g., Jacinta Christie, Nic Maher, Matt Heron)  Riverina LLS staff (e.g., Team Leaders Peter Beal (Acting), Mark Leary and Tom White, with Louise Hufton and Cherie White)  Stakeholders such as Farmlink, Lake Cowal Foundation, Local Govt., Graham Centre (CSU and NSW DPI), Irrigation organisations, wildlife and nature groups | |

**DISCUSSION POINTS**

1. **Strategies and Objectives of the Riverina Program**

Ideas are listed below:

* Promote:
* Landcare and NRM
* Community capacity-building
* Sustainable agriculture
* Delivery
  + Integrated network model comprising MLi volunteers, RLFs, LSCs, LLS officers, located advantageously to promote efficiency, effectiveness and equity
  + RLFs to have a prime mentoring role (facilitators encourage coordinators), along with support from experienced Landcare coordinators (Louise Hufton, Cherie White)
  + Electronic delivery of news, fact sheets, web resources etc.
  + Social events to encourage group dynamics
  + Reduce bureaucracy, have fun
  + More listening and doing, less speaking
  + Output and outcome driven, rather than input-driven
* Educate
  + Identifying and promoting opportunities for community grants
  + Grant writing workshops
  + Events
  + Involvement of schoolchildren, students and youth as Landcarers

1. **Potential Alliances** (can’t cover all but the supporters are open to offers and opportunities)

* MLi/LLi and Landcare NSW (crucial link, already strongly established)
* MLi/LLi and Riverina LLS (crucial link, developing collaboration)
* Farmlink (and other grower groups)
* Ricegrowers, Cottongrowers, Murrumbidgee Irrigation
* Office of Environment and Heritage
* Local Government
* Greening Australia
* Lake Cowal Foundation
* Graham Centre for Agricultural Innovation, universities
* Region to Region collaboration (e.g., with Holbrook Landcare Group, with SE Landcare)
* Murrumbidgee/Lachlan wildlife and nature groups
* Others, agribusiness?

1. **Landcare Support Coordinator Network (for discussion with stakeholders)**

Model 1 (based on the equivalent of 2.4 FTEs for the Riverina Region)

Locations and allocations are for discussion but set out below are some possibilities

* WAGGA (administration, support, located at MLi and/or LLS) 1.5 dpw
* TEMORA (covering Ariah Park, Junee and Bland districts) 1.5 dpw

Includes alliance with FARMLINK

* YOUNG (1 dpw) + Harden (Louise H) + Cootamundra (1 dpw) 2.0 dpw
* TUMUT (Cherie White) + GUNDAGAI 1.0 dpw
* Henty-LOCKHART-Narrandera (Lockhart location?) 1.5 dpw
* WEST WYALONG 1.5 dpw
* HAY + Rangelands 1.5 dpw
* Griffith-Yanco (Irrigation sub-region, working with Irrigation organisations) 1.5 dpw

2.4 FTE or 12.0 dpw

Comment – 1 dpw may be seen as an insufficient investment in appointee, area and people, leading to underpayment/burnout and network instability.

Model 2 (based on the suggestion from Landcare NSW of 0.5 FTE per position, 5 positions)

Locations for discussion

* TEMORA (with Farmlink)
* NARRANDERA-HENTY
* W WYALONG (with Lake Cowal Foundation)
* HAY
* GRIFFITH (with irrigation stakeholders)

Comment – workable. However, Young is a gap (there has been some feedback about a Young-Grenfell alliance, need to consult with LachLandcare), and Tumut and Harden will require inputs from experienced LLS Officers at those locations.

1. **Steps for an integrated, region-wide bid**

* MLi strategy meeting, also discuss with LLi ✓
* Riverina strategy meeting (LLS and Landcare) ✓
* Consultation with and EOIs sought from potential community/organisation stakeholders (alliances)
* Development of bid, including further partner or strategy meetings, as required
* Public consultation meetings **October 7, Griffith and Temora**
* Check compliance with Landcare NSW requirements
* Final meeting and sign-off, **before mid-October deadline**.

Prepared by Ted Wolfe of MLi, endorsed by Tom Stacy (MLi) and Rob Kelly (Riverina LLS)