

April "Antics" from the Chairman, The Mulloon Institute

It has been a very busy few weeks at The Mulloon Institute since my March "Musings". This month I use the word "Antics" with tongue very much in my cheek. Everyone has been getting on with the job. Following Michael Thomes' departure the load has had to be distributed in this interim period while we determine an appropriate replacement given our developing needs. In more recent weeks we have had to also redistribute tasks previously undertaken by Pauline Georges as she advised she was leaving to work with the NSW Department of Environment.

Pauline was employed to assist with our fundraising but she assisted Michael and others in a number of ways including more recently getting the website finalised and live and also establishing the "Virtual Water Tank" fundraising project. More on that later. So we thank Pauline for her work with The Mulloon Institute and wish her all the best in her new role. With Pauline's departure we welcome Jen Southwell who is assisting me for a day or so a week. Jen was born and bred on the Monaro to a farming family and has worked within the Federal Government for many years so will be a great asset to The Mulloon Institute.

The Mulloon Community Landscape Rehydration Project (MCLRP) continues to gather pace. The baseline work involving a number of universities is well on track with Luke Peel now finalising arrangements to purchase and install the piezometers.

Our partnership with the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) is a key relationship for the MCLRP so recently Peter Hazell, Luke Peel and Jen Southwell came with me to Orange to meet with two of DPI's strategic people, Tracey Macdonald and Peter Reagan. We wanted to ensure they understood our gratitude of the work their colleague, Tony Bernardi, continues to do as part of our baseline work and to fully explain the aims of the whole project and its relationship to increasing productivity of the agriculture sector.

The meeting was very positive and productive from both The Mulloon Institute's point of view and from DPI's. As a result of the meeting we will be shortly signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DPI that will take us forward in a collaborative working relationship.

I mentioned in the March "Musings" of our selection as a demonstration project within the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UNSDSN). While it is very exciting from a global perspective, it is proving to be very beneficial domestically. People take notice when I make reference to it and so it is something to assist us raise our profile and ultimately support both financially and other resources.

I also mentioned last month of a meeting with Michael Ball from the Southern Highlands. He put me in touch with The Shannon Company in Melbourne, a company very focussed on assisting with behaviour change. Something we all want to see with our landscape. I had a meeting with a



partner at The Shannon Company, Michael Daddo, in Canberra and that progressed to another meeting with him and founder Bill Shannon while I was in Melbourne. That meeting also included Professor John Thwaites from Monash University who is also Australia's representative on the UNSDSN. You may know John as a former Deputy Premier of Victoria and a former Minister for Water. I did deal with John in that capacity when I had responsibility for water reform in the Federal Government so it was good to meet. He was very interested to better understand our project and also it was a great opportunity for me to hear more about the UNSDSN. John explained it is a reasonably informal group very much about encouraging university involvement in implementing the UN's sustainable development goals. He also mentioned that it is intended to hold a summit in Australia later this year and that he would certainly want The Mulloon Institute involved so that we can present on the MCLRP. I'll keep in touch with John and with The Shannon Company as they are very supportive of what we are doing and are going to put together some material on behaviour change in our context for consideration.

I was actually in Melbourne with my "spatial" hat on at a conference called Locate 16. The conference was opened by Angus Taylor MP, the Assistant Minister for Cities and Digital Transformation. I managed to have a few minutes with Angus as Michael Ball had suggested he should be invited to come to Mulloon Creek. I've known Angus and his family for some time as his father and brother farm on the Monaro. He also heard Tony speak at a function in the Southern Highlands a few months ago. Angus is keen to come but commented it will probably have to be post the looming election. But there were other good contacts at that conference. A senior person from the Federal Department of Environment expressed great interest in our work and wants to get his Department more involved. Although I've spoken to the Minister, Greg Hunt, along the same lines, it is always beneficial to work from both ends.

I also spent time with the head of Geoscience Australia (GA), Chris Pigram, and one of his staff, Stuart Minchin. GA has developed an excellent system linking all historic satellite data going back to the 1970's and see this system as one that will help report on the UN's sustainable development goals. So they are interested in using the MCLRP as a possible trial project for their data. I've subsequently had contact from Stuart's boss, Adam Lewis, and Luke will be following him up.

The other beneficial contact with the Federal Department of the Environment came via an opportune meeting in an airport lounge with Ian Chubb, former Vice-Chancellor of ANU and former Chief Scientist. Ian is doing some work for the Federal Government on issues affecting the Great Barrier Reef. He was particularly interested in our work and very much understood that regenerating and rehydrating landscapes would have a very positive affect on inflows to the Great Barrier Reef. He would also like to visit Mulloon Creek but was particularly keen about getting Department of Environment officials out to see us. He took my card to pass on.

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As part of our work with the other land owners in the MCLRP, Peter Hazell organised a Holistic Management course to be run at Mulloon Creek over three weekends. The first weekend was held a little while ago and the second just recently. Both Peter and Luke have participated and myself, Rose and The Mulloon Institute Director, Charles Cupit, also attended. A number of the land owners have been participants as well as others who support our work. It is a very instructive course and we are all looking forward to the third and final weekend to be held towards the end of July.

Coming back to our "Virtual Water Tank" project, as I write the total we have raised is \$2250. A nice start but it would appear that except for one donation the balance has come from people very close to The Mulloon Institute. The project is hosted via a crowd sourcing site, *chuffed.org*, which people wouldn't necessarily find. So it is really important for as many people as possible to send the link to their own networks and encourage people to assist. As we get closer to the end of the financial year it is a wonderful way for people to do something to help repair our landscape and get a 100% tax deduction in the process. Please help us with this as with a little bit of momentum it might just take off and we will raise some serious funds for the MCLRP. And just asking people to contribute can often help. We have recently received a \$25,000 donation to help us with our vital work so a few more like that and it can add to our credibility when we also ask Government to contribute.

Finally, our Founder, Tony Coote AM, with whom I speak regularly, is currently in Europe with Toni and is giving us all good news of their trip. Rose and I will be meeting them in London on the 7th May and together we will be visiting Rothamsted Research where one of our Advisory and Science Advisory Council members, John Crawford, is based. Rothamsted has one of the other four demonstration projects in the UNSDSN so we are very keen to swap notes and learn more. Until my May "Mumblings" all the very best and never hesitate to contact me if you have any queries, ideas or anything else The Mulloon Institute needs.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Nairn'.

Gary Nairn AO
April 2016