

## June “Jottings” from the Chairman, The Mulloon Institute

“Jottings” is probably an appropriate word for this month’s update as there is not quite as much to report on compared to previous months although much has been happening out on the ground.

A very significant event occurred during June and that was the huge downpour early in the month. After many months of very dry weather, Mother Nature really made up for it over a few days. While I haven’t got the actual millimetres that fell in the catchment I have seen the debris in the trees and out on the flood plain, quite a sight! Down at Peter’s Pond it would appear the flood that went through there in the early hours of the 6<sup>th</sup> of June was between three and four metres above the normal creek water level!

Other than a couple of relatively minor “displacements” all the structures in the creek held up superbly and as a result the system worked exactly as Peter Andrews designed with extensive water movement right out across the floodplain. Apparently this was the biggest flood since the mid 1970’s so a wonderful test of the work that has been done on this section of Mulloon Creek over the past ten years. This gives us great confidence as we progress the total catchment project being the Mulloon Community Landscape Rehydration Project (MCLRP).

While no-one is complaining about the rain it has caused some delays. In particular Luke Peel was all ready to supervise the drilling and installation of a series of piezometers which will be monitoring ground water for the MCLRP. They are crucial pieces of equipment initially as part of our baseline work and then ongoing during and after the construction of in-creek interventions and associated plantings.

With so much rainfall the floodplain was very wet and it would have been impossible to get heavy drilling equipment into the area. Given that we are now well and truly into winter the chances of the region drying out sufficiently is quite remote so we have had to put that job off for a couple of months.

Also some of the other monitoring equipment (e.g. stream gauges) suffered some damage, which I guess was inevitable given the flood levels, so together with the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) we are considering what may be covered by insurance. Just another challenge when you have sensitive scientific equipment confronting the forces of nature.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> June Rose and I attended the opening of “Tombarra” at Mongarlowe near Braidwood. “Tombarra”, a conference and accommodation venue, has been extensively renovated by new owner Martin Royds. Martin has done a great job and is particularly promoting it as a place of learning and healing and a venue for environmental and agricultural learning. Martin is no stranger to The Mulloon Institute having been involved in our activities for some years. He has put much of what we advocate into practice at his own farm, “Jillamatong”, near Braidwood, which is recognized for its regenerative farming and holistic land management.



There was a crowd of over 100 at the opening and Martin asked me to provide an update on The Mulloon Institute's work as part of the "official" opening. Major General Michael Jeffery, Chairman of Soils for Life, cut the ribbon and also spoke about his organisation's work. Tony, Rose and I also caught up with Michael a couple of days later to talk about the ongoing collaboration between our two organisations.

We see great opportunities working with Martin and "Tombarra" as The Mulloon Institute conducts training and other workshops in the near future. Martin has also recently joined our Advisory Council bringing additional excellent expertise to that important part of our governance and guidance.

The Board of the Mulloon Institute met during June as part of our regular governance oversight and to give all Board members an update on the MCLRP and a briefing on our UK trip which I summarized in my May "Mumblings". A Development Council meeting followed the Board meeting.

As you will have read in my May "Mumblings" a field day was scheduled for the 19<sup>th</sup> June. Unfortunately, due to the weather event mentioned above and the weather forecast for that weekend, we had to take the decision on the Friday prior to the event to postpone it. It was still very, very wet and with over 120 people registered to attend we didn't want to see Tony's access road and fields where cars would park inevitably damaged. It was also looking like a very unpleasant (cold and wet) day on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

So it was re-scheduled for the 3<sup>rd</sup> July and while a few people dropped off the registration list it certainly proved to be a wise choice for the field day. Technically this should be in my July update but as it was supposed to be in June I can report now on what a great success it was. Yes the day started very cold (minus five or less!), but a beautiful sunny day and with appropriate jackets and beanies all were very comfortable.

The inspection of the creek under guidance from our experts was certainly a real treat as there was plenty to inspect post the flood. After a RFS Bungendore cooked steak and sausage sandwich lunch there was a fascinating question and answer session and discussion in the barn with our expert panel. The panel comprising Tony Coote, Peter Andrews, Michael Wilson, Martin Royds, John Field and myself, facilitated by Peter Hazell, was thrown many excellent questions relating to the work done at Mulloon Creek, work to be done on the MCLRP and the implementation of similar work and systems more broadly across the nation.

A survey will be going out to all participants so I will be able to report further on this wonderful event in my July update.

While the piezometer installation might be stalled, there are plenty of other tasks happening over the coming weeks. For instance, Luke is busy planning more bird surveys and working with the Department of Environment & Heritage and Canberra University regarding surveys and potential relocation of Green Gold Bell Frogs. And Pete Hazell is working closely with the Office of Water regarding our design of creek structures and our applications.

Pete will also join me, Martin Royds and Wendy Fitzgerald on a trip to Tarwyn Park with Peter Andrews to document some of his work there, which will be input into course development for future The Mulloon Institute workshops.



The wash-up from our "Virtual Water Tank" fundraiser added \$4250 to our bank account. Not what we had hoped for but every bit counts. The Development Council learnt much from that exercise and I'm sure will have many new and exciting fundraising activities in the near future.

On a final note, I'm sure all readers of these "Jottings" will join me in sending well wishes to Toni Coote for a speedy recovery and we look forward to having her back on the farm very soon.

Cheers,  
Gary Nairn AO  
Chairman