

## August "Axioms" from the Chairman, The Mulloon Institute

When putting pen to paper (fingers to keyboard actually) to report on the month of August happenings within The Mulloon Institute it was hard to know where to start as there has been so much on the go. But as always I had to start with a description that goes with "August". I chose "Axioms", you probably wonder why. I'll explain, but a little bit of detail first.

Our month started in Sydney where Tony and I met with about ten interested employees of Sydney Water. Sydney Water has the task of delivering safe, clean water to the people of Sydney. We instigated the meeting as we have always been of the view that given our Mulloon Community Landscape Rehydration Project (MCLRP) is in the Shoalhaven catchment, which is at the headwaters of the Sydney water supply catchment, those controlling Sydney's water supply should be aware of the MCLRP. And they were keen to know!

However, as some of you reading this report will know, Sydney Water doesn't have responsibility for the catchment, that role belongs to WaterNSW, Sydney Water just have to clean-up whatever "mess" they are given. Unfortunately that means that if that "mess" is not good, a much greater amount of "cleaning-up" is required, that is, more chemicals and much more expenditure. Our view is that a substantially smaller amount of expenditure in the catchment ensuring a cleaner flow of water is far better both environmentally and economically. Sydney Water agreed. So WaterNSW is next on our list.

During that meeting we raised the very similar situation New York found itself in a number of years ago and ultimately spent tens of millions of dollars assisting farmers deliver a cleaner water supply from the rural catchment but saved hundreds of millions of dollars in lower treatment costs. And substantially less use of chemicals.

The Sydney Water people raised with us the challenge they have with an ever developing Western Sydney and specifically South Creek in the catchment. We talked about the use of "green" infrastructure rather than "hard" infrastructure and Sydney Water expressed an interest in working with The Mulloon Institute on possible solutions. To that end a delegation from Sydney Water will be visiting us later in October to see firsthand our work on the MCLRP.

Also while in Sydney, Rose and I met with Professor Nick Schofield who heads up UNSW's Global Water Institute. They have an impressive range of academics within their Institute as it crosses several disciplines including governance and law. Nick is keen to pursue opportunities with us especially for their many PhD and post-doctoral students. We agreed that Nick and some of his key personnel should visit the MCLRP in the near future. As I'm writing this a few days into September I can report that a very productive visit took place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September which I can report more fully on in next month's report.

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In my July "Journal" I reported on our trip to Tarwyn Park and the circumstances involving the Andrews' family and the proposed mine by Kepco. I mentioned the importance of ongoing access to Peter Andrews' work at Tarwyn Park and the recording of the physical changes that have occurred. I was seeking to sit down with Kepco to discuss those issues and am pleased to inform you that will be occurring at a meeting in Sydney later in September.

Meanwhile I have also continued to engage with the Federal Government in relation to this and the broader matter of natural resource management and the work of The Mulloon Institute. After providing the Prime Minister's office with a briefing, Pete Hazell, Jen Southwell and I attended a meeting with advisers from four Minister's offices namely Prime Minister, Environment & Energy, Agriculture & Water Resources and the Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister.

That was a very productive meeting and as a consequence I am now preparing a more detailed briefing to those four Ministers. The Mulloon Institute strongly believes that although most natural resource management responsibilities lay with the States and Territories national leadership is required to coordinate a national approach to landscape regeneration and rehydration in the same manner that the Howard Government did with water reform. I'll keep you posted on progress.

Speaking of the States, on the 5<sup>th</sup> August our local State Member of Parliament and Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills and Minister for Small Business, John Barilaro, visited us to officially announce the \$100K grant from the NSW Environment Trust. This grant was previously mentioned in my monthly report but it was a great opportunity for John to inspect the pilot project on the Home Farm at Mulloon Creek Natural Farms and to learn about the MCLRP. The grant will be used directly on the MCLRP.

We were also able to discuss with John the many other aspects of our work including the development of training courses to ensure many more people have the skills to undertake similar work to what is involved in the MCLRP. His responsibilities with respect to Skills is of particular relevance. Following John's visit I corresponded to him our thanks for his interest and time and provided him with a number of detailed issues he has promised to follow up on our behalf both within his responsibilities and with his colleagues including the Minister for Primary Industries, Niall Blair. We look forward very much to hearing back from John Barilaro.

Meanwhile out on the ground much continues to occur but much more is about to occur. Pete Hazell continues to work with the Office of Water on the design and approval for the instream interventions planned for the MCLRP when he is not keeping other government departments happy by reporting on progress of a number of grants, helping put together other grant applications and liaising with a variety of partners with respect to workshops we will commence to run later in the year, to name just a few of his tasks.

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Similarly, Luke has supervised the many tasks needed to complete the capture of baseline information. Just some of the examples include fish surveys with the University of Canberra, aquatic macro-invertebrates survey with ANU, bird surveys with the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, soils baseline collaboration with ANU, landscape function analysis (LFA) on numerous sites, plus more. Much of this work was monitored by our Science Advisory Council, which met during August.

The “much more to occur” will be the commencement of the first two Green Army teams starting on the MCLRP in September. We are very pleased to have been chosen under this Federal Government program that will see a total of six teams over the next 18 months working on various aspects of our project. The “20 Million Trees” program will also commence on the MCLRP in the coming months.

So to ensure the smooth operation of all of this we recently advertised for a Project Officer to assist both Pete and Luke in their work. We had a number of applications when it closed last week and will now hopefully proceed to making an appointment as soon as possible.

I mentioned workshops later this year. As part of a Local Land Services (LLS) grant with respect the MCLRP, we will be conducting a series of workshops. As part of the preparation for those workshops we are partnering with Skillset and developing a curriculum and “How To” guide and we want to assist local farmers and others to learn as much as possible. So we will also be partnering with Stuart Andrews and Duane Norris who will bring their “Tarwyn Park Training” program to the Upper Shoalhaven in November. In conjunction with Martin Royds and his “Tombarra” accommodation venue a total package of training will be on offer between 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> November. More detail will be on our website shortly. You may know someone who will be interested in attending. You might want to attend as well.

While I’m talking about our website, another addition that should be there soon is a wonderful three and half minute video called “The Soil Story”. This is an open source video that our Development Council Chair, Rose Nairn, found and had Tony Coote, our Founder, record the voiceover with reference to The Mulloon Institute. It is a simple explanation as to why we have a landscape problem and how easy it is to fix, as we are doing with the MCLRP. The truth is obvious and plain to see in the landscape.

Before I say that’s all for August and wish you well for September, you are probably still wondering about the title of this report, August “Axioms”. In this report I spoke about the meeting with Sydney Water and the need for clean water, about Tarwyn Park and its landscape transformation and about “The Soil Story”. All of these matters remind me of Peter Andrews’ often said advice that the solutions are there in the landscape and obvious to see.

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Well, my Collins dictionary defines "axiom" as "a statement that needs no proof because its truth is obvious"!

I look forward to reporting to you at the end of September which will include reporting on the UN Sustainable Development Solutions (UNSDSN) Summit to be held in Sydney on the 7<sup>th</sup> September. Somehow I was dragged into encouraging the attendance of a Federal Government Minister to attend, particularly to reinforce its commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals, that it came a signatory of in 2015.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Nairn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'G' and 'N'.

Gary Nairn AO  
Chairman