

## September “Scratchings” from the Chairman, The Mulloon Institute

While there is much to report from September, with no real need to “scratch around” for things to say, I’ve called this month’s news September “Scratchings” in recognition of the great work the Mulloon Creek Natural Farms hens have done and continue to do. Production has increased substantially – great work by the hens but also the team at MCNF in a challenging very wet month.

The highlight for September for me was attendance at the UN Sustainable Development Goals Summit held in Sydney on the 7<sup>th</sup> September. It was jointly organized by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UNSDSN), Growth Compact Network Australia, the Australian Council for International Development and ACOSS. As our Mulloon Community Landscape Rehydration Project (MCLRP) is one of five global demonstration projects selected by the UNSDSN I was asked to make a presentation at the Summit. Our founder, Tony Coote AM, was also in attendance. We were also able to assist the organisers by helping to secure Federal Ministers Connie Fierravanti-Wells (International Development) and Angus Taylor (Cities and Digital Transformation) as keynote speakers.

I presented as part of a panel that included a representative from Brambles, Telstra and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The presentation was well received and generated interest among the 150 attendees. One particular subsequent discussion was with Lachlan Feggans who presented on behalf of Brambles. He is their Senior Manager for Sustainability. There are many aspects to Brambles’ business including CHEP, the pallet company, which sources its timber through sustainable forestry. It is subsequently engaged in carbon offsetting and therefore seeks to explore opportunities in this regard with The Mulloon Institute. I’ll be meeting with Lachlan during October.

One of the facilitators at the Summit was Bill Shannon from the Shannon Company. You will recall I met Bill and his colleague, Michael Daddo, a few months ago following an introduction by Mulloon Institute supporter, Michael Ball. The Shannon Company specializes in campaigns focused on changing social attitudes and had shown a strong interest in our work. At the Summit I organized to meet again with Bill later in September when I was to be in Melbourne to pursue further how they might assist us. More on that later in this report.

Also attending the Summit was ABC national rural reporter, Serena Locke. I have known Serena for many years but particularly during my time in Parliament. Serena has previously visited and reported on the pilot project at Mulloon Creek, Mulloon Creek Natural Farms and also extensively on the work of Peter Andrews.

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So she was very interested in my presentation to the Summit and followed it up with an interview with me covering the MCLRP, its selection by the UNSDSN and other related issues. Her story went to air on the ABC NSW Country Hour on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> September, plus there were several ABC on-line stories. The recording of the interview that went to air was distributed to all our interested supporters but if you missed it let Jen Southwell know and she will email it to you. My speech notes for the presentation at the Summit are also available.

The radio interview has created plenty of interest but also reinforces the value of obtaining such coverage. We need to continue to keep the broader community engaged and interested in our work. I know this is something that our MCLRP Project Coordinator, Peter Hazell, has raised and is looking to the incredible range of base line studies we have done and continue to do as a source of such stories. He will be working with our Science Coordinator, Luke Peel, to generate these stories for distribution via our website, Facebook page and other social media as well as traditional radio, TV and print media.

During September I caught up with a couple of old friends who are engaged in projects that ultimately have connections and relevance to our work.

Libby Hepburn from the far south coast of NSW is a key figure in citizen science and the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA). She has overseen a number of bioblitz events along the far south coast and the import of substantial data into the ALA. She is very interested in our MCLRP and has offered to organize a citizen science bioblitz in conjunction with us. This is something I will discuss with Peter Hazell and Luke Peel as it will be a further way of engaging the broader community, not to mention acquiring more data to complement our other studies.

I also caught up with Vanessa Lawrence who was briefly in Canberra from the UK. Vanessa is the former head of Ordnance Survey, the UK's mapping agency. She is currently doing work with the UN and the World Bank but was in Canberra to do a review of some of Geoscience Australia's work. Vanessa was very interested in The Mulloon Institute and its work, and particularly the connection to the UNSDSN and the UK's Rothamsted Research. I'll keep her informed and she will keep me informed of her UN work – one never knows where these connections end up but it is important to keep them.

As mentioned earlier, I was in Melbourne later in September. I was at Melbourne University to speak at an International Symposium on Smart Future Cities about sustainable cities and planning related matters. There was a strong focus on the UN SDG's and in particular the role of spatial information, but it is always encouraging when involved in such forums to realise just how relevant our work is to so many aspects of future development and growth that was being discussed. I feel very fortunate that my various roles in planning, the spatial sciences and with The

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Mulloon Institute regularly reinforce each other in so many ways and assist in spreading our word and making great connections.

Also, as mentioned earlier, I caught up with Bill Shannon and Michael Daddo. Unfortunately that meeting started on a sad note with the news that our mutual friend, Michael Ball, had passed away a day or so earlier. Michael was someone Tony Coote has known for some time but was only more recently known to me. He was an icon in the advertising industry having headed up the global company Ogilvy & Mather.

Tony and I spent a couple of hours with Michael a few months ago and he was very excited about our work and was eager to support us and provide connections for our future benefit. He was a very inspiring person and I have very much enjoyed his feedback particularly to our new website and my monthly reports. He will be sadly missed and Tony and I will endeavor to attend a memorial service for him in Sydney on the 19<sup>th</sup> October and extend condolences to his wife, Daria, and family.

Following that sad news I had a very positive discussion with Bill Shannon and Michael Daddo about developing a narrative for The Mulloon Institute. They are experts in that field and will provide me with some examples of some of their relevant work so that we might look to how they can assist us in our further promotion and our work.

With respect to the on-ground work at the MCLRP, we are getting nearer the pointy end. For example, two Green Army groups are commencing activities on the ground as you read this report. With such activities underway there was an urgent need to increase our own resources, so following an advertising and interviewing period, I'm pleased to report that Cam Wilson is coming on board as a Project Officer for the MCLRP.

Cam has previously worked at Mulloon Creek Natural Farms, particularly on the pilot project, and has subsequently worked on similar natural resource management projects in various locations. He is also completing a Masters in Environmental Science at the ANU so will be a great asset to The Mulloon Institute and substantial help for Peter Hazell and Luke Peel.

The weather has continued to challenge us on the ground with another very wet month but monitoring work continues, albeit with some difficulties, plus planning, grant applications and many other projects keeping all the team busy. We also had an excellent visit by Professor Nick Schofield and two of his team from the Global Water Institute at the University of NSW (UNSW) earlier in September and true to form it was raining! But they are excited about our project and how they might be involved is something they and us are currently pursuing.

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There will be much to report on at the end of October for sure. Until then, thank you again for your great interest and support.

Cheers,

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

Gary Nairn AO  
Chairman

P.S. Check out our website where the "Soil Story" video is now located. Send this link to all your friends - <http://themullooninstitute.org/videos/> and "like it" on our Facebook page as well.