

## October “Omniscience” from the Chairman, The Mulloon Institute

In reporting on our activities during October I toyed with a variety of descriptions including “Observations”, “Obsessions”, “Obstacles”, “Offerings”, “Opportunities” and even “Ordeals” as each one could have described some aspect of the last month. But I decided to be much more positive and perhaps a little futuristic in settling for “**Omniscience**” which the Australian Collins Dictionary defines as “knowing all things”. Nothing like striving for perfection but I also like the word as when you break it up – “omni” meaning “everywhere” plus “science” – so effectively “science everywhere” which is a good description of the basis of our work.

October saw a continued interest in our Mulloon Community Landscape Rehydration Project (MCLRP) from various people and organisations with visits on site by Sydney Water, the Alliance for Regenerative Landscapes & Social Health (ARLASH) and a group of Australian and international visitors led by Peter Andrews.

The visit by five staff from **Sydney Water** was a follow up to a meeting Tony Coote and I had in their Sydney office which I reported on in my August “Axioms”. They were keen to see first-hand the results of the pilot project at the Home Farm as well as the broader view of the MCLRP. Sydney Water is tackling the challenge of rapid growth in western Sydney and therefore wanted to talk with us about the application of our methodologies to some of their issues. They were enthused by what they saw and discussed and we look forward to working with Sydney Water in the near future.

Our science co-ordinator, Luke Peel, organized for some **ARLASH** members to visit. We were pleased to welcome Richard Thackway, Val Brown, Dana Kelly and David Marsh. ARLASH is instigating a very similar project to our MCLRP in a small catchment near Toowoomba in Queensland so was keen to understand how we have developed the MCLRP and particularly the involvement with landholders. Their project, while being substantially smaller in catchment area, has substantially more landholders as it adjoins an urban area.

The ARLASH members were very impressed with the results on the Home Farm pilot project and we had a very stimulating discussion with them about all aspects of landscape rehydration and regenerative agriculture. We will have an on-going dialogue with ARLASH for our mutual benefit.

Our third visitation for the month was led by **Peter Andrews**. Peter’s reputation and connections go broadly across Australia but also internationally. So we very much welcomed Martina Eiseltova and Libuse Vlasakova from the Czech Republic and John Leigh from South Africa together with Tim Wiley from Western Australia, Dave from the NSW Central Coast and Jen Hunt from Victoria.



Our Czech visitors, having studied under Jan Pokorny (one of Peter Andrews' European colleagues) were keen to learn first-hand about our MCLRP after travelling to other landscape projects in other parts of Australia. Australia may be very different to Europe but there is still much in common when it comes to landscape repair so international collaboration is and will continue to be part of The Mulloon Institute's work.

You will recall in last month's September "Scratchings" I mentioned meeting Lachlan Feggans, **Brambles Sustainability** Manager, at the UN Summit. I had a follow up meeting with Lachlan during October which was very positive. As mentioned last month, Brambles is very focused on sustainability and will be releasing its sustainability report very shortly. Lachlan is very interested in our MCLRP and will work with me to see how our project may fit with Brambles policy of carbon offsetting. These relationships don't happen overnight but we have commenced a very positive dialogue.

While I was in Sydney I attended the annual conference of the **Cooperative Research Centre for Spatial Information (CRCSI)** (wearing my spatial sciences hat), but there was much at the conference that connects The Mulloon Institute. In fact, there was a complete session on Natural Resource Management (NRM) which covered many areas of interest to us. In particular a young PhD student, Arjan Wilkie, spoke about his work on "Improved High-Resolution Carbon Accounting". The science in this area is progressing very rapidly and fits nicely with the discussions on carbon offsetting with Brambles. Arjan has provided me with his presentation and I will follow his work closely.

Related to this very topic is the work of **Geoscience Australia (GA)** which has now accumulated all its historic satellite imagery and data into one accessible data set called the "Cube". I will be shortly meeting with the head of GA, Chris Pigram, as he is of the view that GA is potentially able to provide substantially more reliable information on **carbon measurements** including with respect to soil. Technology will be a great partner to us as we progress our MCLRP and prove scientifically the positive impact of landscape repair and rehydration is having not only on agriculture but also on our climate with the reversal of carbon loss to the atmosphere. Exciting times ahead!

During October I have also been able to continue to engage with the Prime Minister's office and the offices of the Minister for the Environment & Energy and Minister for Agriculture & Water Resources. The feedback from the **Prime Minister** has been very supportive of our work and his office has provided me information on how the MCLRP would fit within the environment portfolio's Emission Reductions Fund (ERF). I am following up on that as well as potential opportunities through the Department of Innovation, Industry & Science that could provide financial support to our project.



One milestone completed this past month was our final report to the **Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation (VFFF)** for the very generous grant we received in 2014. The MCLRP is a much larger project than first envisaged when we initially received their grant and the work we have been able to do with that assistance has enabled the larger MCLRP to result. Peter Hazell put together an excellent report to the VFFF and often it is only when you prepare such a report do you realise just how much we have achieved. I've invited the VFFF to come and see our work on the ground as I'm sure they will be impressed of our progress with their assistance.

In coming weeks and months we will be gradually further populating our website with much of the **scientific data** being collected and subsequent reports so that our many interested supporters can see and read in more detail the work completed and being done.

Speaking of supporters, I was a guest on **Canberra radio 2CC's** Tim Shaw's breakfast show on the 20<sup>th</sup> October. Tim gave me a wonderful opportunity to speak about The Mulloon Institute and the MCLRP and he also did a great job in promoting us and encouraging listeners to view our website and to contribute to our work. If you would like to listen to the interview the link for the podcast is on our website at: <http://themullooninstitute.org/blog/> While in the "News" tab you will also find some great videos under the drop down box, including one put together by a former ABC journalist, Johannah McOwan, or simply click here: <http://www.johannahmcowan.com/>

November will be another busy month and will include our first **4 day workshop** which is fully subscribed. The workshop will be in conjunction with Stuart Andrews & Duane Norris from Tarwyn Park Training together with Peter Andrews. Training is an important part of what The Mulloon Institute is doing and we will be further developing courses to assist landholders and others undertake landscape repair, rehydration and improved farm management.

Finally, there has been plenty of activity on the ground with the commencement of two **Green Army** crews doing work across the MCLRP including planting plenty of trees as part of our 20 million trees project funding from the Federal Government. There will be a total of six Green Army crews working in our area over the next 18 months which will be of great assistance to the MCLRP.

Thank you again for your great interest and support and if you have any queries or want to give us information please don't hesitate to contact me.

Cheers,  
Gary Nairn AO  
Chairman