

November "Nines" from the Chairman, The Mulloon Institute

You will be all starting to count down the days to Christmas but before we get too comfortable about the rapidly approaching festive season it is important to reflect on the happenings during November to give you something to contemplate during the holiday period.

But first, why **November "Nines"**? I considered "Necessities", "Niceties", "Notices", "Nourishment", even just plain old "News". Scripting my monthly "news" is very stimulating personally and hopefully some of that stimulation rubs off on you the reader. So I like to start with at least a stimulating heading.

And **"Nines"** does that in the context I am using it. That context is in the phrase **"to the nines"** meaning "to perfection" and the Etymology Dictionary tells me it was first attested in Burns, and apparently preserves the ancient notion of the perfection of the number as three times three (such as the nine Muses). In addition, it is November and **"novem"** means **"nine"** being the 9th month in the Roman calendar which started in March. I'd never claim perfection but it will always be a goal.

November has been a very busy month for all involved in The Mulloon Institute so I'm sure I can report on at least "nine" things to keep the theme. Let's see how I go.

1. November saw the first of our **workshops** conducted in conjunction with **Tarwyn Park Training** (TPT). This was a very successful workshop with Stuart Andrews and Duane Norris from TPT combining with Peter Andrews to deliver the workshop over the four days. We had a full complement of participants and the feedback was excellent. Just prior to the commencement of the workshop we received confirmation that The Mulloon Institute and our workshops had been accepted as qualifying for a subsidy under the Federal Government's **Industry Skills Fund** (ISF). Peter Hazell did great work on the application and with our success a number of the workshop participants were eligible for a refund of part of their costs from the ISF. We are now planning the next Mulloon Institute workshop.
2. As mentioned in my October "Omniscience", I was to meet with Chris Pigram, the Head of **Geoscience Australia** (GA). That occurred early in November and was very positive. GA's Data Cube is providing an incredible range of historic remote sensed data and they are gradually realising the extent of new research that can result from the integration of various data sets. GA is keen to work with us on the issue of **carbon storage** and this will be an area that I will be asking our Science Advisory Council to follow up in 2017.

3. Directly related to **carbon storage** was a meeting attended by myself, Peter Hazell and Jen Southwell with senior representatives of the Federal Department of Environment and Energy, Katrina Maguire, Ben Docker and Paul Ryan. This meeting came from a direct referral from Bruce Male, the Prime Minister's Senior Adviser on the Environment and Agriculture who I have been in regular contact over recent months. The purpose of the meeting was for us to better understand the **Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF)** and for the Department to better understand our Mulloon Community Landscape Rehydration Project (MCLRP) and its application to the ERF. We need to do more assessment of the two aspects of the ERF but the bottom line is it is not very easy to comply. The government would seem to understand that difficulty as it proposes a review in the first part of 2017 and is very interested in having input on other methodologies. We are very keen to demonstrate that working at the landscape or watershed level is addressing much more than simply putting carbon back into the soil but how that can fit within a government funding program is a challenge. But a challenge we will continue to pursue.
4. Also directly related and following on from previously reported meetings and actions, Tony Coote and I met with a number of people from the organisation **Climate Friendly**, including its MD Freddy Sharpe. Lachlan Feggans, Sustainability Manager at **Brambles** was also at that meeting. Climate Friendly is a significant player in the carbon accounting and offsetting space and is involved in a number of projects that have qualified under the ERF. The difficulties identified in our meeting with Departmental staff were reinforced in the meeting with Climate Friendly. But they were particularly interested in our MCLRP and other activities and expressed a strong interest in coming to see us "on the ground". They are also working with corporations such as Brambles in the broader voluntary carbon market and it would seem this is where our interest and corporation interest in what we are doing lies. This will be a major focus for us as it is the opportunity to have large corporations investing in landscape repair as part of their sustainability goals. Much more to come here.
5. Out on the ground much has been happening. In previous monthly updates I spoke about the **Global Water Institute (GWI) at the University of NSW** and their interest in our MCLRP. During November a team from the GWI were on the ground for three days with their sophisticated measuring equipment to record substantial subterranean measurements of the baseline hydrological and geophysical conditions. They measured electrical resistivity tomography, carried out ground conductivity mapping and utilised global navigation satellite system surveying. An interim report is expected soon with much more analysis to follow as part of an honours student's program in 2017. This will be important input into the design and construction of interventions in the creek and ultimately in analysis of the benefits of those interventions. We are very pleased to have this eminent research group working with us.

6. Also out on the ground has been our **Green Army** teams getting many of the trees allocated under the **20 million trees** project in the ground. Something in the order of 5000 trees have now been planted along with other environmental works. The Mulloon Institute's Cam Wilson has been overseeing much of this activity and we have been utilising the expertise of Matt Kilby to make sure things are done right the first time and the planted trees have the best possible chance of survival.
7. The **piezometer program** put on hold a number of times due to the very wet weather we experienced in June and July finally got underway in late November. It was worth the wait as the conditions have been ideal for the drilling rig and by the end of November they were well progressed with the work and running ahead of schedule. This work is being overseen by The Mulloon Institute's Luke Peel and DPI's Tony Bernardi along with some volunteer students making sure all samples are collected and logged. More will be reported at my next monthly update.
8. Our involvement with the **UN Sustainable Development Goals** (SDG's) continued with an invitation to present at a conference at Sydney University. As I was interstate Peter Hazell represented The Mulloon Institute and was part of a panel including the **National Farmers Federation** (NFF) and agricultural grower **Simplot**. The SDG being addressed at that part of the conference was **SDG 2 that targets the elimination of hunger**. As one would predict the NFF and Simplot concentrated on agricultural efficiencies to increase production so our message that fixing the landscape first up would deliver a more sustainable basis for agricultural activity was well received. Peter was able to enlarge on our MCLRP and its relationship to sustainable agriculture and productivity. These events are certainly helping to expand awareness of the MCLRP and The Mulloon Institute.
9. At the very end of November (or perhaps the first day or so of December) news came that as part of negotiations over the backpacker tax, an additional **\$100m** would be allocated to **Landcare**. As it was short on detail we will be interested to understand how the government might add it to existing, change or develop new programs in the general Landcare space. The close liaison I have had with the Prime Minister's office has indicated that there is an interest in developing a true landscape policy so perhaps the discussions and presentations on The Mulloon Institute and our MCLRP may have had some influence on this possible new development. As I write, the rumour is the Green Army program will cease in favour of a new initiative that would appear to be linked to the \$100m announcement. I'm maintaining my close liaison with the government and so will report as information comes to hand. Separate to this, but still relevant, is a meeting I will be having at the end of January with the NSW Minister for the Environment, Mark Speakman.



So advantageously I've covered nine areas of interest over the past month to fit with my theme. But there are other matters including Luke Peel investigating possible involvement in a future CRC on smart farming and linking with Meat and Livestock Australia as part of that involvement and also wishing all our supporters and readers of this monthly update a very ***Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year***. The festive season is rapidly approaching so as per normal all sorts of frantic work is being done so that some relaxation time occurs over that period. The Mulloon Institute will be having a Board meeting plus a meeting of our combined Councils (Advisory, Science Advisory and Development) along with our AGM prior to Christmas so that we have a chance to reflect on what has been a very busy and productive year and importantly plan for activity in 2017.

From Rose and me, Tony and Toni Coote, Peter, Luke, Jen, Donna, Cam and Bec, and all Board and Council members, thank you again for your interest and support and we look forward to an exciting and prosperous 2017.

Cheers,
Gary Nairn AO
Chairman