



December 2016/January 2017 "Delivering Jewels" from the Chairman, The Mulloon Institute

Firstly a belated Happy New Year to everyone. I trust the festive season was relaxing, enjoyable and was a chance to re-charge batteries and catch up with family and friends. Rose and I certainly took the opportunity to do that but have been back in the swing for a few weeks now.

Given the festive season I decided to delay my monthly update and combine December with January thus the dual heading this time "Delivering Jewels". The impetus for that came partly from the fact Christmas is a time of giving (and delivering) and with more crucial things having been done on the Mulloon Community Landscape Rehydration Project (MCLRP) over the past two months we have some real "jewels" in place.

As I mentioned in my November "Nines" update the festive season is also a time for reflection and contemplation so I was able to do plenty of that as Rose and I travelled from home north as far as Mooloolaba and return over a twelve day period. There is certainly no better way to appreciate the changing landscapes and the diversification of agricultural output, and the need for repair of creek and river systems was constantly apparent. At The Mulloon Institute we have a goal to repair 100 catchments - that will only be the start from what we observed.

At the time that I reported on November happenings, substantial activity was underway to drill and **install a series of piezometers** as part of the MCLRP benchmarking. That work proceeded very successfully, so successfully that we were able to have a few additional holes bored within our original budget. Luke Peel oversaw this work along with great assistance from staff of Mulloon Creek Natural Farms (MCNF) and particularly Scott plus other volunteers. Not only do we now have this piece of vital infrastructure (one of the "jewels") we also have soil samples from each of the bores that could prove valuable in the future with respect to determining changes in soil carbon. This was a great project and thanks go to Luke and his team for such an efficient job.

In early December, as a follow up to meetings about **carbon storage**, I met with Gerry Carroll one of our landholders supporting the MCLRP. Besides doing some excellent work with composting and other innovations on his farm, Gerry is also involved in a company called Natural Carbon. That company is involved with some projects funded under the Emissions Reduction Fund and with Climate Friendly so it was good to discuss how the MCLRP might also get involved. Peter Hazell and Luke Peel are putting together some data for Natural Carbon so that they can better understand our project and potential outcomes.

Also in early December we hosted a visit by the Head of **Rothamsted Research**, Achim Dobermann and his wife Ilwa. Rose and I were fortunate to spend a weekend with Achim and Ilwa back in May last year when we toured some very innovative farms in Norfolk, UK. We have a



strong relationship with Rothamsted Research (another “**jewel**”) which commenced when John Crawford returned to the UK to take up a position with them.

Tony and Toni Coote hosted Achim and Ilwa at Mulloon Creek and they were able to see firsthand the work we have done and propose through the MCLRP. Achim was very impressed at what has been achieved and is excited about a number of collaborations we discussed while he was here.

Just one example is the research work on willows that Rothamsted has been doing for a very long time. Our Science Advisory Council member, Michael Wilson, will be particularly interested in their work and Achim has provided contacts that will be passed on to Michael.

Achim has also provided information about a UK Government program, Demonstration Test Catchments, which is addressing catchment repair to counter flooding issues. It is remarkable how complementary the work being done in the UK is with our work although the problem is somewhat opposite. It is good to see the UK Government supporting such work, something we continue to pursue here in Australia.

We continue to stay in touch with the work of Soils for Life (S4L) and in that regard S4L’s Michael Jeffery invited Peter Hazell and myself to attend a presentation by Terry McCosker on soil carbon followed by a discussion in a round table format. The new CEO for S4L, Natalie Williams, was also at that discussion and subsequently visited the MCLRP in January. We will continue to collaborate with S4L in areas of mutual interests.

2016 came to an end for The Mulloon Institute with a Board meeting followed by a joint meeting of the Advisory, Science Advisory and Development Councils and attendance at the MCNF Christmas Party in the barn.

Planning work for 2017 has been the order of the day since the New Year started although some planned meetings had to be put on hold when a **serious bushfire** threatened the northern MCNF farm, Duralla, where 20,000 hens are located plus the egg processing facility. It was somewhat of a miracle that we only lost half a dozen hens and some infrastructure. The fire went through one of the flocks but avoided the laying sheds thanks to the firefighting effort and seemingly, the Maremma dogs that protect the hens, herded them in under the sheds as the fire passed. Great work by farm manager Michael Fitzgerald and his team (more “**jewels**”).

Unfortunately our neighbor and one of the major landholders in the MCLRP wasn’t anywhere near as lucky having lost his house plus substantial damage to the property including livestock. We send our best regards and will be assisting in any way we can as he works to recover.



There is much about to happen in the coming months including our second workshop in March and a presentation to the NSW Geography Teachers Association also in March. Our various Advisory Councils will also be meeting in February as they guide the work of The Mulloon Institute over the coming year.

All the very best to you and thank you for your ongoing support.

Cheers,
Gary Nairn AO
Chairman