

21/09/2015

Lakes Hub Annual Report

2014 – 2015 Financial Year



Milang & District Community Association Inc.



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Quick Facts

For those who want to know what the Lakes Hub has achieved this year, but are in a rush, here are some quick facts.

Interactions

- Lakes Hub was contacted 19,696 times (averaging 82 contacts per business day).
- Lake Hub staff or volunteers provided information on the Lakes and Coorong to visitors, community and government staff 11,887 times (averaging 50 instances per business day).
- Staff gave eight presentations to community groups and other organisations.
- We sent 2,373 emails, not including emails to the Bulletin subscriber list.
- 2,711 people visited either the Milang or Meningie Hub.

Bulletins, Facebook, Website and Media

- Thirty-two electronic bulletins were produced and were opened by 38% of bulletin subscribers.
- At the end of the financial year, there were 547 people on the Bulletin subscriber list, with others accessing the bulletin through Facebook, the website and other organisations mailing lists.
- Lifetime likes (subscribers) on Facebook went from 133 to 290 individuals.
- On Facebook, 165,697 post impressions over the 2014/15 financial year, with each unique user being shown approximately three posts per day.
- There were 7,622 visits to the Lakes Hub website, peaking at 1057 visits to the website in May. March and June both had over 900 website visits.
- Most visits to the website included downloading the latest Bulletin.
- There were 14 media releases and printed-media published articles facilitated or about the Lakes Hub, along with six radio interviews organised by the Hub.

Public Events

- Through the Bulletin and other media, Lakes Hub provided community members with information on 123 opportunities for training, learning and education.
- Lakes Hub ran a total of 20 events for the community, with 340 attendees.

Community Nurseries Network

- Twelve Community Nurseries Network (CNN) meetings were facilitated over the year.
- 30-40 local people have been employed through the CNN over the financial year, along with approximately 40 volunteers each month.
- Eighteen school-based events were run by the CNN coordinator.

Meetings

- Lakes Hub staff attended 10 training events, 41 DEWNR run meetings and 17 meetings run by other parties.
- 92 meetings were held at Lakes Hub shop-fronts.
- Six Lakes Hub Advisory Committee meetings were run, with an average of ten attendees.

In addition during 2015/15 the Lakes Hub have strengthened key partnerships with stakeholders such as the South Australian Murray Darling Basin Natural Resource Management, Community Engagement Team as well as the CLLMM Community Advisory Panel.

Introduction and History

The Milang & District Community Association Inc. (MDCA) has been a key organisation in the Lake Alexandrina region since the early 1900's. Run by members of the community MDCA seeks to respond to community need, develop resources, capitalise on opportunities and advocate for the interests and well-being of the community.

Operating through the Milang Old School House Community Centre, MDCA was aware of the stress local communities were under during the prolonged period of drought and subsequent environmental crisis in the region. MDCA put forward a proposal to the Coorong Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) Team, part of the SA Department for Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) that would enable the community to be meaningfully involved in decision making regarding Lower Lakes projects, would establish the Lakes Hub as a one stop shop for information sharing and community activity, facilitate community engagement, networking of community nurseries and provide community education, training and volunteering opportunities.



Lakes Hub

Under the original business case for the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) Recovery Project, funding was sought from Australian and South Australian Governments to support the operation of the Lakes Hubs for three years to 30 June 2014. The original business case was prepared during the recent drought (2006 – 2010) and was primarily focussed on the urgent needs of the CLLMM community at that time. This included the need for the community to assist governments in managing the impacts of the drought and to ensure effective communication pathways were established.

Since 2009 the Lakes Hubs have played a key role in supporting productive and positive relationships with community stakeholders through engagement, promotional, education and coordination activities. Since the breaking of the drought in 2010 the direction of the CLLMM Recovery Project has been modified to adapt to the new environmental conditions, and the needs of the community have changed accordingly. For example, the operation of the Lakes Hubs have adapted to these changes through establishing strong governance and resource support to the Vegetation Program and facilitating the dissemination of information from the CLLMM Recovery Project to the community.

An independent mid-program review of the CLLMM Recovery Project in late 2013 found that the community engagement and coordination role of the Lakes Hubs has been a key factor in improved relationships between community and government and has directly improved delivery outcomes of the Recovery Project.

By providing community facing shop fronts in both Milang and Meningie, the Lakes Hub have conducted community engagement and involvement in the Recovery Project, shared information on the site and coordinated environmental education and training to build local capacity. This impact has been confirmed with 2014-15 Show Survey results and Results Based Accountability (RBA) scorecard assessments.

The review indicated that community engagement should continue to be a focus for the remainder of the Recovery Project. This is understood to mean that continued positive engagement would strengthen Recovery Project outcomes at 2016 the completion date of the CLLMM project.

There continue to be CLLMM management actions that have ongoing community engagement requirements, such as the development of a Site Operations Manual, Transition activities, South East Flows Restoration Project and construction of Fish ways which will require communications at a whole of CLLMM regional and local scale.

There are also community concerns within the CLLMM region in regards to community preparedness for the next drought and ongoing ecological issues that are likely to be remnant effects of the drought, such as the Long-nosed Fur Seal incursion or the slow recovery of terrapin (turtle) or mussel populations.

Funding for 2015/16 to enable the implementation of the Lakes Hub Transition Plan was also secured during 2014/15



Lakes Hub Operations in 2015/15

The use of the Alberts Coffee Shop for the Meningie Lakes Hub has proved to be a good decision, with a consistently higher visitation than was achieved at the previous location. Increased tourism visitation has led to many worthwhile conversations, however it is the increased local visitation and interaction with Coorong Cottage Industry (CCI) members that has been the most worthwhile.

The Meningie Lakes Hub office continues to provide ongoing support to the Friends of Meningie and Friends of the Coorong groups and has become a point of contact and information source for the Ngarrindjeri.



The Lakes Hub at Milang provided office space, computer access, support and resources to visiting DEWNR staff, volunteers and other project staff throughout this funding period. The GWLAP Planning Association Inc have continued to have project officers based in the Milang Lakes Hub. This enables community access to technical staff, strengthens the relationships between MDCA and the LAP's, allows close proximity to project sites and opens up pathways for volunteering and information sharing.

Between the two offices, the Lakes Hub has provided a venue for ninety-two meetings. While some of these were DEWNR events, a significant number were run by other government agencies or community groups (for example Friends Of groups and Progress Associations), who find the Hub shop-fronts a useful gathering point for their activities.

During 2014-2015 the Lakes Hub have had several staff changes. In November, the Lakes Hub Coordinator, Megan Collins left on parental leave, with Faith Coleman filling in for the period during which Megan was away. Carole Richardson continued as the Community Nurseries Network Coordinator until the de-funding of the role at the end of June, 2015. She continues to be the manager of the Clayton Bay Community Nursery. The Lakes Hub administration assistant was employed one to two days a week at Meningie for most of the year, leaving us to go work at the Tintinara School in May. The Milang office continues to employ an administration officer for one day a week.

Community Engagement

The Lakes Hub has been working closely with the community and DEWNR to prepare a Transition Plan. This was a substantial portion of the work undertaken by Lakes Hub staff over this financial year. It is very rewarding to see that it is now being implemented, in an effort to prepare the Lakes Hub for finalisation of CLLMM funding (30 June 2016). Over the next year we will work with stakeholders to scope a Community Drought Preparedness Plan (Drought Ready Communities). As part of this planning, Lakes Hub staff will continue to liaise with community to find out about future aspirations, management of the Ramsar site and any emerging opportunities for increasing sustainability and resilience across the Lakes and Coorong.

Over this reporting period, Lakes Hub staff and volunteers have kept the two shop fronts both open to the public for approximately 4.5 days per week. One or both shop fronts were closed for approximately half a day per week, as staff attended meetings or ran events elsewhere.

In addition the Lakes Hub have continued to work closely with community, government and non government organisations to ensure the health of the region, and to help protect and restore biodiversity and to assist community organisations to establish commercially viable community nurseries. This includes provision of training and workshops aimed at increasing the independence and commercial potential of the nurseries and research and planning in sustainable social enterprise opportunities. The Lakes Hub remain committed to support diversification and community resilience and increasing skills and environmental knowledge among local community members.

A Steering Committee continues to fulfil a number of functions, including; guidance and support to the Lakes Hub Coordinator, strategic direction for the Lakes Hub project, community ownership of the project, monitor progress of the program and to manage risk.

Representation on this committee includes Goolwa to Wellington LAP, DEWNR, MDCA, Meningie Progress Association, Alexandrina Council, Coorong District Council, SA Murray Darling Basin Natural Resource Management Board (SAMDBNRM Board), along with representatives of the general community and Ngarrindjeri.

The Lakes Hub Coordinator has been attending CLLMM Community Advisory Panel meetings, as an advisor. The Community Advisory Panel is a voluntary non-statutory, community-based advisory body. It provides input by working with the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) to facilitate the exchange of information for the development and implementation of CLLMM Recovery Project actions. The Lakes Hub Coordinator attends the bi monthly meetings and provides support to the CAP by enabling information dissemination via the Lakes Hub web site and Bulletin newsletter.

Lakes Hub Communications and Engagement Strategy

A comprehensive Community Engagement Strategy enables the Lakes Hub to provide an effective two way flow of information and feedback between the community and the DEWNR CLLMM team which is vital for adaptive management of the CLLMM Recovery Program.

Effective community engagement through the Lakes Hub is designed to:

- Provide early warning sign of emerging issues, allowing them to be dealt with proactively
- Build a broader understanding of common issues affecting environment and communities
- Allow exploration of a wider range of solutions and possibilities
- Build positive relationships
- Support effective communication
- Build resilience within the Lakes communities
- Support a shared problem-solving approach to decision making
- Develop greater community ownership of solutions to problems
- Keep Government, industry and communities informed about projects
- Provide the opportunity to use local knowledge to enhance project outcomes
- Develop an extensive volunteer network throughout the region.

The Lakes Hub have been able to maintain effective networks with all stakeholders and develop new relationships at regional, sub regional and cross regional levels. 2015/2015 operation of the Lakes Hub has highlighted various engagement issues in the CLLMM community including key environmental issues such as the Dredging of the Murray Mouth and the incursion of the Long Nosed Fur seals in the Coorong and Lakes. Broader relationships forged during the Lakes Hub operations during 2014-2015 has assisted engagement with these issues.

This year, Lakes Hub representatives attended forty-one DEWNR and seventeen non-Government meetings regarding all aspects of the CLLMM Recovery Program and related issues. All stakeholders are well aware that they are always welcomed and appreciated at any Lakes Hub functions, workshops and seminars etc.

Partners and stakeholders are realising that the Lakes Hub are an ideal medium to access/communicate with other agencies and the community at all levels which in turn, gives the community opportunities to be more actively involved in planning processes, scientific evaluations and on-ground works.

Project information, such as up-coming events and opportunities are displayed at various contact points around the CLLMM region and is made available to the wider community through various media. The Lakes Hub is promoted across the Coorong and Lower Lakes region at every opportunity.

2014/15 Stakeholder Interactions

The volume of interactions that the Lakes Hub has with various interested parties is substantial. This is through a range of media including face-to-face, emails, mainstream or community media, interpretative displays, factsheets, the bulletin, website and Facebook.

Over the last financial year, the Lakes Hub was contacted **19,696** times. This works out to approximately 82 contacts per business day. Some of these communications do not require a response, so our response to contacts rate is lower than the actual contacts, however in **11,887** instances, staff or volunteers provided information on the Lakes and Coorong to visitors, community and government staff. This averages 50 information disseminations per business day.

Lakes Hub staff gave **8** presentations to community groups and other organisations, we sent **2,373** emails (not including emails to the Bulletin subscriber list) and **2,711** people visited either the Milang or Meningie Hub.

Lakes Hub Bulletin

The Lakes Hub Bulletin provides local community members with regular articles on local environmental projects, biodiversity and wetlands management, along with articles on similar projects being undertaken elsewhere. The Bulletin contains links to government information and provides regular updates on the CLLMM Recovery Program and local events. The Community Nurseries Network Coordinator also provided regular updates via the Lakes Hub Bulletin. Government Departments, Community Groups and other Environmental organisations utilise the Bulletin to promote their organisations, activities and up-coming events. On occasion the Bulletin will feature a special theme for example CLLMM projects, local school holiday activities, Ramsar Convention, National Reconciliation Week and World Environment Day.

During 2013-2014 the Lakes Hub transitioned the Bulletin from email delivery to an E-Bulletin format and reduced the Bulletin the fortnightly rather than distributing weekly. This change has enabled the Lakes Hub to continue to provide a quality PDF community newsletter whilst utilising the latest technology. The E bulletin streamlines the delivery of the Bulletin and provides the Lakes Hub with vital statistics that supports our capacity to measure community engagement and community interest. The Bulletin is distributed to a database of **547** recipients and is further disseminated through other email distribution lists. The database contains local, national and international groups and individuals. **32** editions were produced in this **12**-month period. Approximately **38%** of bulletin subscribers opened their email for each edition over this financial year.

Lakes Hub Website

The Lakes Hub website continues to grow steadily in popularity. It was updated on a fortnightly basis, providing a wealth of information and links to related sites. The Lakes Hub Bulletins are posted on both the website & Facebook page every week as well as CLLMM Community Updates, Quarterly 'Seeds to Reeds' Community Nurseries Network Newsletters, Community Advisory Panel Communiques as well up-coming events, information produced by the Lakes Hub, CLLMM and other Government projects in the region. We have also updated many of the features and stories on the website with new information over the past year.

Visitation to the Lakes Hub website has grown over the year, as shown in the chart below. There were **7,622** visits to the Lakes Hub website, peaking at 1057 visits to the website in May. March and June both had over 900 website visits. Most visits to the website included downloading the latest Bulletin.

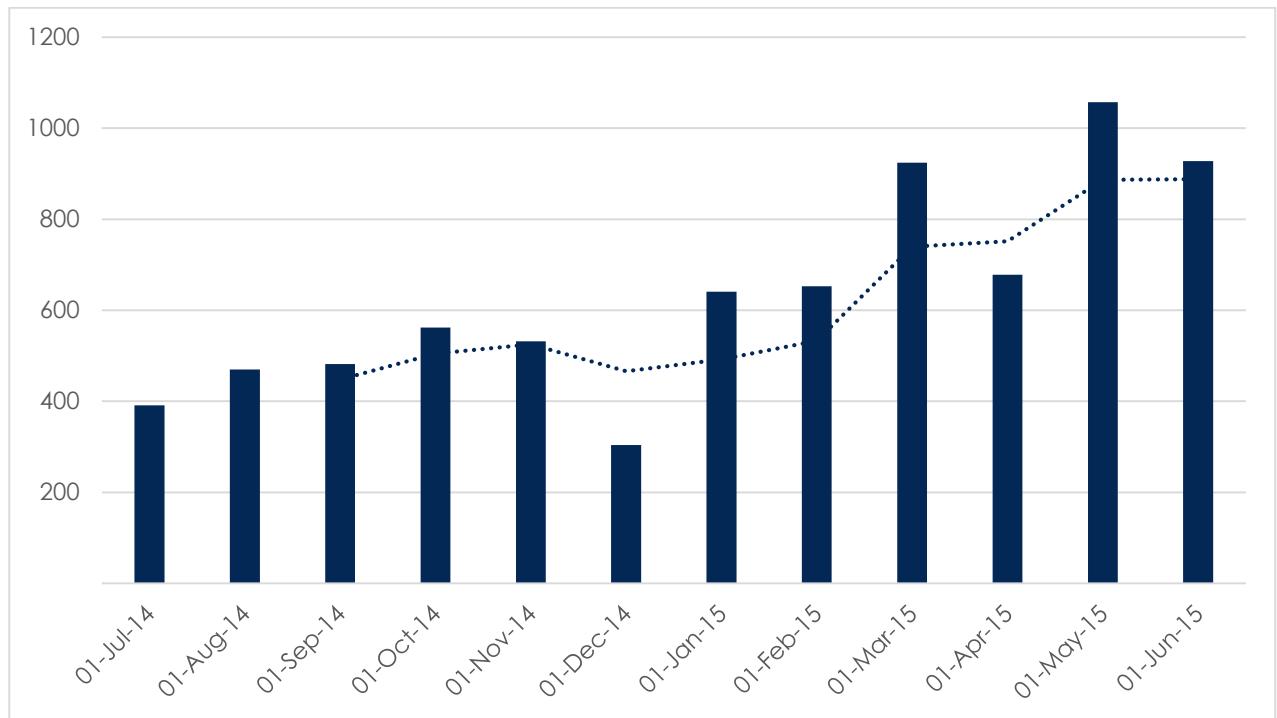
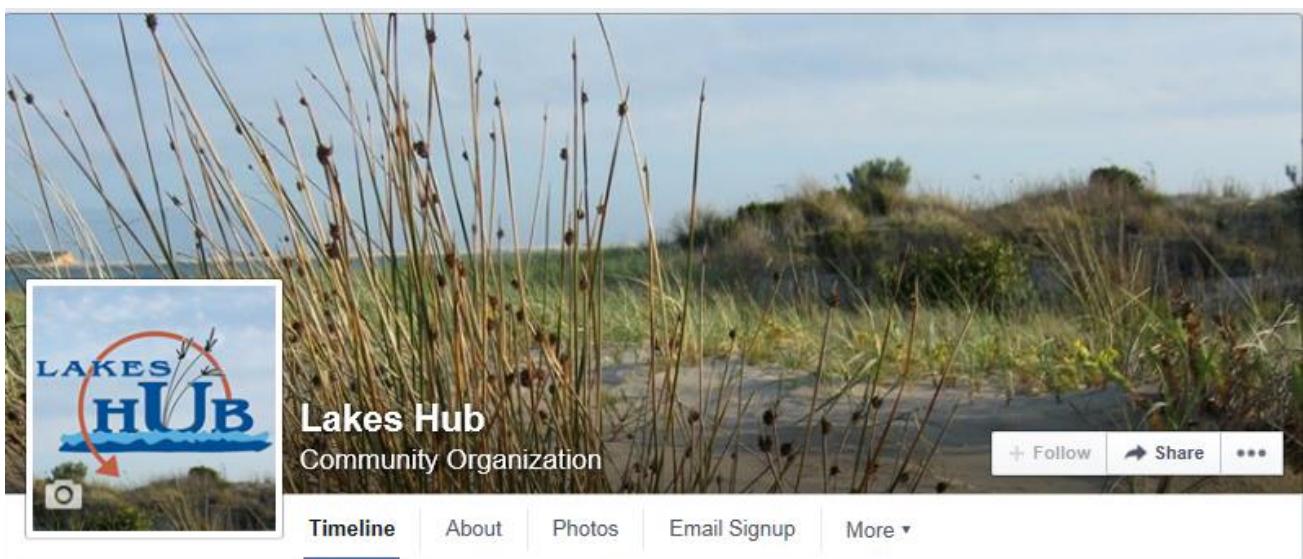


Figure 1: Lakes Hub Website unique user visitation per month, plus three-month rolling average.

Lakes Hub Facebook Page



The Lakes Hub Facebook page has experienced a rapid growth in popularity this year, with **165,697** post impressions over the 2014/15 financial year, with each unique user being shown approximately three posts per day. This seems to be due to a range of factors, including;

- greater engagement with the Meningie community who appear to have a higher level of Facebook participation,
- sudden increase in concern over specific environmental issues,
- trialling boosting of specific Facebook posts, and
- posting more stories, fliers, photos or links.

At the end of this reporting period we have **290** followers (lifetime likes or subscribers), doubling the organic reach of posts. We trialed a small amount of advertising, which has proven quite effective, particularly for the promotion of events to a younger audience. In each instance \$6-\$25 was spent per event.

Nine followers unliked the Lakes Hub Facebook page over the year. These occurred in singles, throughout the year. This could be due to individuals finding the volume of posts cluttered their feed, from users .

We had an increase in post hides this financial year, partially due to boosting particular posts. The remainder appear to be 3-4 friends of followers who have engaged with a post, with no discernable patterns in the posts that are hidden. At a frequency of 0.18 hides per day or 0.0004% of post impressions, this is not cause for concern, however it will need to be monitored to ensure that it does not increase or to see if a pattern in post hides emerges.

The key statistics on the following page provides a summary of Facebook interaction for the 2014/15 financial year.

Key Statistics	
Total Lifetime likes	290
New Lifetime likes	180
Lifetime unlikes	9
Total post hides	64
Total number of posts	442
Average daily unique users viewing page content	141
Average daily users clicking on at least one post	13
Average daily users liking, commenting or sharing at least one post	6

Percentage of users that viewed how many posts, per day (4 th Quarter, 2014-15)							
1	2	3	4	5	6-10	11-20	21+
69%	14%	6%	3%	2%	4%	1%	1%

Most popular Facebook Posts	Reach	Boosted
Feral Cat Control Workshop Advertisement	4,948	Yes
World Wetland Day Film Festival Advertisement	4,244	Yes
Cert II in CLM Advertisement	2,966	Yes
Murray Mouth Dredging Workshop	2,515	Yes
Tour de Cure heading into Meningie	1,026	No
Native Bee Workshop	915	Yes
Cert II in CLM Reminder Advertisement	675	No
Seal on Milang Foreshore	648	No
Photos of Meningie National Awards	566	No

Community Capacity -Building

The first step toward enabling the community to participate in decision making is to ensure that they are well informed and regularly in ‘frank and fearless’ contact with those in decision-making roles.

To assist with community with learning and interaction opportunities the Lakes Hub regularly hosted workshops, courses, educational tours and Talking Heads Information Sessions. Topics covered are current CLLMM Program and monitoring results, specific issues of interest i.e. Lake Albert Scoping Study, Murry Mouth Dredging, Community Revegetation Program, and nursery propagation techniques as well as tours of local attractions and community interest.



Talking Heads

‘Talking Heads’ sessions are hosted by the Lakes Hub and are often due to the Lakes Hub responding to community input and concerns regarding local issues, tapping into Government, scientific and local community expertise. Project Officers, local residents and members of other relevant organisations are invited to the Hub or other venue in the region to present information and chat to the public for a couple of hours.

Attendance at Talking Heads varies and often depends on the relevance to current issues and community concerns. Many participants have provided positive feedback both informally and via Lakes Hub feedback forms.

Talking Heads sessions have included:

- Workshops on Murray Mouth Dredging (Meningie and Milang)
- Feral Cat Control Workshop at Meningie
- Bushfood field trip to Neville Bonney’s with the CNN
- Native Bee Information session at Milang
- Recycling tour

Talking Heads Sessions were not relied upon as heavily during 2015/2016 however sessions that are in development but yet to be delivered include sessions on Long-nosed Fur Seals, the Upper South East Flows Project and a DIY Bee Habitat working bee.

Staff Training and Professional Development

As members of the Lakes and Coorong community, as well as an interface between CLLMM staff and the public, it is important that Lakes Hub staff and volunteers are kept well trained and well informed. Over the year, Lakes Hub staff attended a number of training and professional development opportunities, including First Aid, bushfood cultivation, International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) events and the Murray Darling Basin Association conference.



Special Events

The Lakes Hub initiated or took part in special events to mark local, national and international environmental and social celebrations.

Special events include World Wetlands Day (February), World Environment Day (June), recycling week (November), National Water Week as well as events that support biodiversity and raise awareness around the significance of wetlands and the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth System, including an interactive stall in Rundle Mall for two days and two days in a the International Rural Women's Conference in Adelaide.

In addition the Lakes Hub participated in local and regional events with regular displays and exhibitions, for example Strathalbyn Agricultural Society Show, Coonalpyn Show and the Port Elliot Show. The Lakes Hub attended local environmental forums and events, on request.





Groups and Visitations

Bus Tours

Both the Meningie and Milang Hub had several bus tour visitors. This included the Coorong District Council Tourism Information Famil at Meningie and one hundred seniors coming down from Adelaide for a Turtle Talk at Milang.

Schools and Universities

University students often contact the Lakes Hub for ideas for work experience, information for assignments and assistance with research projects. School student participation in activities provided by the Lakes Hub is encouraged, and those activities involving school students are designed to educate as well as entertain the students.

Activities with educational institutions this year has included:

- Meningie Area School had ongoing support as they completed the MDBA Basin Champion Program.
- Three metropolitan high school students contacted the Milang Hub for information on the Long-nosed Fur Seals, one on drought preparedness and one on community action.
- High School student from Goolwa emailed looking for information on volunteering for school project.
- Meningie staff provided support to the Wilderness School for their environmental educational program.
- St Peters School was supported with contacts, information and general facilitation, to run a week-long boys adventurous activities camp for their Year 9 students, kayaking along the Coorong and undertaking site maintenance works.
- One school still actively and directly engaged with the Community Nurseries Network (Investigator Collage) while involvement of other school has decreased with reduced CNN Coordinator time allocated to the task. Information on Trees for Life, their nearest nursery and other environmental programs has been supplied to them, however it is not known if they have engaged with an alternative program.

Show Survey Results

Over mainly October and November 2014, the Lakes Hub attended a range of shows and local community events. To get the best value from these events, staff and volunteers asked those passing by to fill in a multiple choice survey, identifying a range of public opinions on the environment in general, water and the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) region.

Specifically, the survey examined:

- The importance people place on the health of the environment
- How people feel about the health of the CLLMM region
- The perceived inclusion of survey responders' in decision making regarding the CLLMM region
- What the public perceives as the key issues facing the region.

The shows attended were Port Elliot Show, Strathalbyn Show, Clayton Bay Community Fair and Coonalpyn Show. In total, 163 completed surveys were obtained.

Overall interest and concern for the health of the environment remains high on the agenda for respondents from both within and outside the region. Over half of the respondents do not believe that the CLLMM region are in good condition. Despite significant investment into environmental restoration projects in the CLLMM region since 2009 the majority of people surveyed believe there is more that should be done in terms of

revegetation and resourcing for protection of species. Over 90% of respondents agree that it is important to protect and manage the remaining wetlands.

Water is, as expected, a key issue for the region with 84% of respondents indicating that lack of water was a key challenge to the sustainability of the region. The survey indicated the perception that there is not enough water to support the environment as well as agriculture, towns and industry with over 80% agreeing that the available water should be shared equally between environment agriculture, towns and industry.

Other high ranking challenges identified were;

- Habitat and species loss (104 responses)
- Water pollution (102 responses)
- Consumerism and over consumption (90 responses)
- Climate Change (79 responses)

An area of interest is that only 54 people considered sea level rise to be a future challenge for the region and indicates that some work needs to be done to raise awareness of sea level rise predictions and how this issue should be managed if predictions become fact.

In terms of human resilience there was generally a high level of agreement that people;

- Knew where to go to seek information
- Had access to agencies and were able to report issues or concerns that they saw in the region
- In the region were skilled and had sufficient knowledge to care for the CLLMM environment

What is of concern is that only one third of people surveyed felt that they contributed to decisions about how the environment was managed. As the transition from the CLLMM Recovery program takes place it is clear that in our transitioning processes we must engage broadly with CLLMM communities and stakeholders to ensure that the existing high level of concern and care for the environment is transmuted into true involvement in decision making. If this does not take place then we risk losing good will and trust that has been established over the past 5 years and a strong volunteer base whose capacity will be required into the future.



Community Nurseries Network

In 2014/2015 the Community Nurseries Network (CNN) members have commenced their seventh year of propagating. 2014/2-15 has seen increased independence by nurseries, with knowledge sharing and securing larger contracts becoming the main drivers behind participation in the network. Several nurseries have proved successful with applying for external contracts, while others are still primarily dependant on Government contracts.

A tour to Neville Bonney's garden was very popular, with bushfoods becoming a focus for several nurseries toward the end of the financial year. It is expected that the Hub will continue to provide some support for the nurseries by organising similar training events on a seasonal basis for the next financial year.

The group has been able to source nursery practices information from within the group with more confidence, and have supported each other with swapping or supply of seedling trays as needed to fulfil the CNN contracts with Goolwa to Wellington LAP and other clients. Sharing knowledge and resources is still a key to the success of the CNN which continues to grow a large range of high quality plant species within the required time frame.



Quick Stats

- 12 CNN Meetings facilitated
- 18 School-based events run by the CNN Coordinator
- 30-40 locals employed throughout the network.
- 10,000 volunteer hours utilised to grow plants

The Network Nurseries have played an important role in the success of the CLLMM Recovery project with over 1,200,000 plants propagated to date. CNN also grow for other projects and have developed partnerships and work in collaboration with other organisations including the Alexandrina Council, Coorong Tatiara LAP, Goolwa to Wellington LAP, South East NRM Board as well as individual landholders, revegetation contractors and members of the public with the aim of building healthy relationships and establishing a future economic base for the nurseries.

The Goolwa to Wellington LAP Green Army Team has been a huge help to the west-side nurseries of Hindmarsh Island, Clayton and Milang, including setting up the Milang Holding Station for this planting season.

Part of future planning was to identify how to maintain each nursery as a successful small business enterprise with an environmental focus, and training was tailored to support this initiative. While this was a useful process and it helped several nurseries diversify their clientele, reducing the challenges of transitioning during the 2015-16 season, (which will no longer be funded through the CLLMM recovery program), several of the nurseries however, are still expected to be well under capacity and individual staffing may be considered unviable unless further orders can be secured.

A number of the nurseries have upgraded facilities to improve success rates with cutting grown plants and refining propagation skills with seed grown species through continual experimentation. The Lakes Hub assisted the nurseries with both sharing designs and helping fund the construction of Hyco Poppers to help deliver this new seeding cell type for DEWNR orders this year. Removable shade structures have been installed at several nurseries, ensuring greater success through the summer months.

Nursery Achievements and Improvements

Training has been an important factor in the development of skills and confidence and is guided by the group. Workshops undertaken include:

- Growing difficult to propagate and collect species
- Nursery Practices
- Alternative Markets (e.g. bushfood)
- Website and Social Media Management
- One-on-One Microsoft Excel Training
- Plant Identification.



The CNN continued to meet on a monthly basis and a CNN Sub-Committee focussed on forward planning for the CNN group continued throughout the year. It is expected that these meetings will be less frequent without a paid coordinator. The most likely frequency of future meetings being quarterly.

Other meetings attended by CNN Coordinator include Revegetation Steering Committee, Quarterly Project Officers meeting, and Lakes Hub Advisory Committee. In the absence of a paid coordinator, the Lakes Hub Coordinator will attend these on an as-needed basis to support CLLMM recovery Project transition and legacy outcomes.

Investigator College was engaged to grow plants for the CNN this year. Workshops were facilitated for school groups to raise environmental awareness and learn basic propagation skills. Employment and volunteer opportunities have also continued at CNN nurseries. Managers are employed at each nursery providing structured works for volunteers and staff. Approximately **68 volunteers** work at the nurseries over the propagation season, with almost **10,000 hours** of unpaid works achieved per year.



Other key achievements include the focus on broadening networks and marketing of the CNN, with distribution of CNN promotional material to all 20 Million Trees and 25 Years of Landcare Grant recipients. The Milang Shorelines Nursery was successful in their tender to be the holding station for this years plantings, which resulted in the construction of a holding station on site.

Distribution of quarterly "Seeds to Reeds" newsletters continued to be very popular with good readership, working with GWLAP Project Officers on species recommendations for site planning, regular attendance at local shows & field days, identifying training requirements and planning and delivering workshops to increase skills and knowledge of both nursery staff, volunteers and the wider community.



Communication Strategies

Communication with project partners

The Lakes Hub offers an important meeting space as well as providing access to LAP Project Officers and information on projects and upcoming events run by a number of other Government & community organisations.

The Lakes Hub Bulletin content provides various project partners and stakeholders with a direct line of communication with the Lakes and Coorong community. Local environmental and community Groups, various LAP's and NRM Groups regularly advertise projects, training, grants, volunteer and job opportunities through the Lakes Hub.

Facebook is becoming an increasingly useful engagement method, with the Lakes Hub Facebook Page gaining subscribers at a rapid rate, as it approaches more and more advanced community engagement thresholds.

The Lakes Hub host bi-monthly Lakes Hub Advisory Committee meetings to provide support and direction to Lakes Hub staff, provide community drive and ownership, track progress and manage risk. On average, ten people attend these meetings, including representatives from Coorong and Alexandrina Councils, DEWNR and Goolwa to Wellington LAP.

The CNN coordinator attended monthly CLLMM Revegetation Steering Committee meetings. Lakes Hub staff attended a number of meetings on a regular basis including Coorong District Council, Meningie Progress Association, Murraylands Tourism Partnership (Coorong, Lower Lakes Murray Mouth Environment and Tourism Group) and Friends of Coorong. The CLLMM Community Advisory Panel meetings are supported by Lakes Hub staff attendance, as well as information dissemination via the Lakes Hub Bulletin and web site. Lakes Hub staff also attended monthly contract management meetings with DEWNR staff.

Only two CLLMM Project Officer meetings were coordinated by the Lakes Hub this year, as these meetings have become increasingly under-attended. Feedback on how to improve these events was sought and the feedback was generally that the time has come for these events to be opened up to all Lakes and Coorong community groups, with less of a DEWNR project focus. They should also incorporate more practical aspects, such as timely training or a field visit to a difficult to access site.

Development of Community Networks

In addition to strengthening the CNN, the CNN Coordinator provided information and advice to nurseries outside CLLMM who were looking for information on nursery set up, propagation techniques and the functions of the network.

The CNN has received significant support from universities, local environmental businesses, NGO's and contractors, willing to provide practical help and advice to CNN. The Lakes Hub continue to encourage collaboration and partnerships to achieve positive environmental, social and economic outcomes.

The Lakes Hub worked with Investigator College to assist with propagation of plants for the CNN and attend various environmental events and activities run through the Lakes Hub.

The use of Social Media such as Facebook has proven to be an effective mechanism to engage broad community networks, particularly along the Coorong portion of the Ramsar site, as well as to showcase the Lakes and Coorong region.

Quick Stats

92 meetings hosted by Lakes Hub

41 DEWNR meetings attended by HUB staff

6 Lakes Hub Advisory Committee meetings held

Due to the Lakes Hub's specific engagement with communities within the Coorong, Lakes and Murray Mouth geographical region, it has been identified that a strength of the Hub is to network and connect communities across several different council and NRM regions, and therefore have the capacity to encourage broader networks for positive environmental outcomes that reflect multiple community interests and concerns.



As part of this broader Ramsar site community engagement and network building, the Lakes Hub will be working on scoping a Community Drought Preparedness Plan Drought Ready Communities, over the coming financial year.

The Lakes Hub take an active response to reconciliation and to provide opportunities to raise awareness and support for the local Ngarrindjeri Culture. The Lakes Hub have done this by featuring regular articles in the Bulletin newsletter, provide cultural training workshops and events that support positive partnerships with the Ngarrindjeri People. For this year, Ngarrindjeri representatives have been invited to present at several events, from World Wetland Day celebrations and KESAB dinners to Dredging talking heads. Discussions regarding Milang and Narrung joint development have continued. Direct information exchange on culturally important issues such as Long-nosed Fur Seals has also occurred throughout the year.

Volunteer Activities

The community were instrumental in developing and shaping the Hub when it was set up in 2009 and many community members feel a sense of ownership, particularly for a number of long-term volunteers involved in the nurseries. Today volunteers are essential to the success of Lakes Hub activities from membership on committees to helping run events, as well as growing plants within the Community Nurseries.

Volunteer activities include:

- Assistance with manning the Hub shop-fronts
- Preparation of the Bulletin
- Propagation and nursery works
- Weed removal
- Friends of Meningie members help maintain the Pelican Path in Meningie
- Clean-Up Australia Day Activity Pelican Path, Meningie foreshore and surrounding area, organised & advertised by the Lakes Hub.
- Researched local history for Bulletin articles
- Data compilation and analysis

Achievements and Challenges

Achievements and challenges are things that tend to go hand-in-hand with each other. This year has definitely been one of those that present both. With the end of CLLMM funding coming up, both aspects have been coming thick and fast for both the Lakes Hub and other community groups in the region. The prospect of further financial restrictions and reduced feet-on-the-ground to address ongoing drought recovery challenges has brought out both the best and worst in people or their organisations. We expect that this will continue in the new financial year.

5.1 Key Achievements

There have been a number of key achievements for the Lakes Hub this year. The most prominent of these include:

Completion of the Show Survey report, looking at where the community currently sits on a number of Lakes and Coorong related issues. This will be done again in 2015-16.

With facilitation by Lakes Hub staff, Meningie was awarded both the State KESAB Sustainable Towns Champion and two National Keep Australia Beautiful Awards for Water Conservation and Community Action and Partnerships.

The Lakes Hub is engaging with and being utilised by a wider range of organisations, in particular DEWNR programs or branches, including the South East Flows Program or Natural Resources SA MDB.

A Recreational Fishing Grant was received, to help build and interactive display at the Meningie Hub, with the potential for it to be further rolled out to other Lakes and Coorong visitor information venues.



Two sessions relating to Restarting Dredging at the Murray Mouth were held. The one at Clayton was particularly well attended and run in conjunction with the River Lakes and Coorong Action Group, which is the first event done in conjunction with this well-known advocacy organisation.

Joint events with other community groups seemed to be



the flavour of the year, with stalls at the International Rural Women's Conference and in the Rundle Mall, which had material from the Lakes Hub, Community Nurseries Network, Goolwa to Wellington LAP and Coorong Tatiara LAP displayed and interpreted together. These stalls attracted a lot of interest, due to the combined visual impact and diversity of the display materials. The securing of funding for operations of the Lakes Hub during 2015/2016 after the submission of the Lakes Hub Transition Plan was a major achievement during 2014/2015.



While distressing, the publicity relating to ecological dilemmas such as the Long-nosed Fur Seal has proven an opportunity to engage more broadly with sectors of the community that have not traditionally been Lakes Hub clientele, regarding regional clientele issues.

Interaction with the community has increased significantly this year, through the doors, through readership (not necessarily distribution) of the Bulletin and through increased Facebook presence. While there are a number of reasons for this increased engagement, Lakes Hub staff have handled this rapid increase in engagement expectation with a high level of professionalism.

5.2 Challenges

With achievements and change come new challenges. The main challenges facing the community at present include;

- Uncertainty regarding on-going funding of drought recovery activities and community capacity building work.
- Uncertainty with regard to the volume and potential nutrient impacts of the South East Flows Project.
- Restarting dredging at the Murray Mouth, which has triggered a range of concerns regarding the timing of future drought impacts, along with the ongoing drought recovery of the last episode, from the slow recovery of Terrapin (Turtle) and Mussel populations to increasing Long-nosed Fur Seal visitation.
- The increased visitation of the Long-nosed Fur Seal has been a major issue, particularly along the Coorong, for a number of non-traditional Lakes Hub clientele. It is expected that this issue and the community concerns regarding it will become worse, before it gets better.
- Engaging in issues that have not traditionally been CLMM related, or trying to engage with community and departmental staff that have not been involved in the CLLMM process has presented its own challenges, with the Lakes Hub needing to re-establish or expand networks and modes of interaction into these areas. Identifying how to do this, without disengaging the legacy networks has and will continue to be a challenge for the organisation.

Transition planning and governance put in place by DEWNR is expected to assist this period of change.

6. Conclusion

The Hub's are a recognised focal point to gather information or to share community knowledge regarding the region. Information received by the lakes Hub from community members is shared with Government and visa versa to ensure that science is supported by regional historical knowledge to enable robust recovery plans and actions. The figures presented in this report demonstrate that the Hub is definitely one (if not the most) actively outward facing organisations in the SA Murray Darling Basin.

While the Lakes Hub intends to continue to perform this role for the Ramsar site and has put a lot of thought and planning into this, what the Lakes Hub will look like in the future and exactly how it will operate continues to be subject to be a matter of adaptation.

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