

# ACROSS THE **OUTBACK**



## Rain, rain – it came again

**This year is shaping up to be rather like the last with significant summer and autumn rainfall events improving pastoral (and tourism) prospects across the region.**

Rainfall events over January, March and May have meant that all parts of the region should have seen decent rain recharging dams and ensuring sufficient stock fodder is available for the rest of the year.

At the time of writing a large dump of rain was occurring across many parts of the region with Moomba, recording 45.2 millimetres and Nappa Merrie 100 millimetres causing the Cooper Creek to swell, the Strzelecki Creek to run and flash floods to pulse through Innamincka with water 5.6 metres over the Innamincka Causeway.

Several properties in this far north east area are experiencing exceptional conditions, recording large falls in January as well as in May, with some areas totalling 250mm. Some properties now have sufficient paddock feed and stock water for the remainder of 2016.

In the Marla-Oodnadatta district, seasonal conditions are more variable but most properties are in good condition for feed

and water following significant January and May rains.

South of the Dog Fence conditions are generally average, at best. Seasonal prospects in the North Flinders district are good following the January and May rains of 20-50 millimetres. In the Gawler Ranges and Kingoonya districts conditions vary but are generally only average or less; stock feed levels, however, have been bolstered by the May rains of 10-30 millimetres.

Tourists have also been motivated by the rain lured by the spectre of transforming country and the possibility of Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre filling.

Regular fly-overs of Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre have seen fluctuating levels in response to the rains.

Prior to this recent May rainfall the lake's water coverage had been declining with a mid-April fly over indicating all the creeks and rivers had virtually stopped flowing into the lake and much of the surface water evaporating.

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The latest flyover has shown that the May rains brought good falls all around and over the lakes and water coverage has increased again from 30 per cent to about 85 per cent on the north lake, and from less than 1 per cent to about 55 per cent on the south lake. Water is flowing in from the Neales River and creeks on the western side while, to the north and north-east, some of this new water may make its way down the Warburton Creek and Macumba River.

With rain in the region unpredictable, it will be interesting to see what the rest of the year brings.



# Modern Outback Forum

## The outback goes to Canberra

**Outback Australia requires long-term policies and solutions that are designed to meet its unique needs; involve and sustain local people; and value its nature and economies. This was the resounding theme at the Modern Outback forum held at Parliament House in Canberra in March.**

The Australian outback covers nearly three-quarters of the continent but supports only about 800,000 residents – less than five per cent of the Australian population.

Its 'boom and bust' climate, nature of its land tenures, demographics, agricultural systems, and resource-based economies are fundamentally different to those of the rest of Australia.

But those differences are often not well understood by decision makers.

Coordinated by Rangelands NRM Alliance and Pew Charitable Trusts, the forum was held to raise the profile of the outback and to urge that its distinct identity must be realised if policies are to be successfully implemented in the region.

Attended by about 70 delegates, the forum responded to a number of challenges facing today's Australian outback including extremes of wealth and poverty; a lack of long-term regional jobs and development; fewer land managers; declining ecological health; and poor and sometimes declining social and economic conditions, particularly amongst Aboriginal communities.

The forum was opened by Minister for Regions, Senator Fiona Nash while local Member for Grey Rowan Ramsay joined a panel discussion with other outback MPs Warren Snowdon (Labor), Mark Coulton (Nationals) and Rachel Siewert (Greens).

Speakers at the forum covered an array of issues from rangelands policy spoken by Fred Chaney and Tom Calma, followed by panels considering Healthy Country, Political Insight and Healthy Communities.

Wearing several hats – Cordillo Downs pastoralist, OBE beef producer and SA Arid Lands NRM Board Presiding Member – Janet Brook was on the Healthy Country Panel.

***“The outback regions of Australia contribute significantly to our national economy through our various industries – mining, tourism and pastoralism – but our small population often means we don’t have the influence we should have when it comes to shaping national policies and our future.”***

**The Healthy Country panel – Mark Stafford-Smith (CSIRO) speaking with Andrew Drysdale (Chair, Rangelands NRM Alliance), Barry Trail (Director, Pew Charitable Trusts) and Janet Brook (SAAL NRM Board Presiding Member).**

“People tend to do things to us, not with us and it’s important the outback states and territories pull together for critical mass to influence both the policy agenda and where funding is directed – whether that be in the area of health, education, technology and natural resources management.”

Another SA Arid Lands local took part in the forum with Jenny Cleary, Chair of the Far North Regional Development Australia and the Deputy Prime Minister’s Regional Reference Group, joining the Healthy Communities panel.

A cross-sector Outback network will be developed to continue the push for better acceptance and integration of rangeland issues by the country’s decision makers.

The Rangelands NRM Alliance will be involved in its development to keep natural resources management issues at the forefront.

### Further information

**Contact Kate Forrest, Executive Officer, Rangelands NRM Alliance**

*Rangelands NRM Alliance, Pew Charitable Trusts, SAAL NRM Board*



## PASTORAL BOARD AND UNIT CONTACTS

THE PASTORAL BOARD OF SA  
Level 6, 81-91 Waymouth Street  
ADELAIDE SA 5000  
(GPO Box 1047, Adelaide SA 5001)

GENERAL ENQUIRIES  
Freecall 1800 678 447

PASTORAL BOARD 2016

- 16 June Adelaide
- 18 August Adelaide
- 20 October Adelaide
- 8 December Adelaide

# Lessees contribute to Pastoral Board review

**Seventy-six pastoral lessees responded to an in-depth, independent survey of the Pastoral Board of South Australia over a five week period during March and April.**

Conducted by market research company, McGregor Tan Research, the survey focused on landholder understanding and perceptions of the role and function of the Board.

It also sought recommendations for how the Board (and its delivery agent, the Pastoral Unit) can improve communication, policy making processes and operations. Around 200 hard copy surveys were posted out to landholders in March in conjunction with an emailed announcement, multiple Facebook posts and direct phone calls, allowing several means of responding to the survey.

In addition to the survey, feedback was also sought from key stakeholders – such as peak industry bodies (eg Livestock SA), statutory authorities (eg SA Arid Lands NRM Board), Native Title groups, progress associations, banks, stock agents and other related organisations.

The survey data is currently being analysed by McGregor Tan Research with the findings to be presented to the Board at their next bi-monthly meeting in June.

The review aims to ensure the Board and the Pastoral Unit are administering the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989* in the most

effective way possible and will help drive improvements to meet evolving stakeholder needs and expectations.

The review was driven in part after the Parliament of South Australia passed an amendment to the *Board and Committees – Abolition and Reform Bill 2014* last June, where the Pastoral Board was retained in large part due to community and industry support.

The Board also hopes the review will lead to improved engagement with the community and other stakeholders.

All responses are confidential, with results reported in aggregate and no responses attributed to any individual.

Results will be made available in a future edition of *Across The Outback*.

The Pastoral Board thanks those who contributed to the survey.

### Further information

**Contact Chris Turner, Pastoral Unit Team Leader 8124 4957 or 0418 812 484**

*Pastoral Board, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands*



# Renewable projects: a potential windfall for pastoralists

**Pastoral lessees now have a new opportunity to diversify their business through renewable energy projects, both wind and solar.**

Changes to the *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989* now allow renewable energy developments to occur with existing pastoral enterprises and other businesses.

The *Pastoral Land Management and Conservation (Renewable Energy) Amendment Bill 2014*, which came into effect in September 2015, allows renewable energy investors to access Crown land that is subject to a pastoral lease for renewable energy projects.

Under these new arrangements, interested lease holders may contact renewable energy developers directly to discuss their options for diversification and the initial project development.

A land access agreement is negotiated between the pastoral lessee and the renewable energy developer with all other interest groups, such as Native Title holders, being fully consulted before a licence can be granted.

Once a project proposal is prepared, applications are submitted to the Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation who can then grant renewable energy licences for a term of 25 years, with a right to renew for an additional term.



Developers must pay licence and development fees for any wind farms into the Pastoral Land Management Fund with 95 per cent of these payments distributed to the pastoral lessees and Native Title holders after consultation. There are separate financial arrangements for solar farms.

For both wind and solar projects, developers must comply with critical progress milestones, or risk cancellation of their licence or developments.

All Crown land subject to a pastoral lease is eligible regardless of its approved land use.

However, wind and solar farms are not possible in the Woomera Prohibited Area due to potential interference with the Woomera defence equipment.

These changes are contributing to the SA Government's target of achieving 50 per cent renewable energy production by 2025.

Renewable energy not only helps the environment; it stimulates growth in the clean energy industries of the future, and provides employment and economic opportunities for many regional communities.

## Further information

**If you are interested in these opportunities, contact Lyn Taylor or Chris Turner 1800 678 447 for a list of potential developers.**

*Natural Resources SA Arid Lands*



Grader on Mulgathing Station

## New best-prac road and track management DVD

### **WATER YOUR LANDSCAPE, NOT YOUR ROADS!**

Interested in improving your grader skills, track design and knowledge? Want to save yourself time and dollars? Land managers, transport workers and others who grade roads in the region now have access to a new DVD featuring soil conservation expert, Col Stanton, aimed at preventing soil erosion and restoring natural water flow across country.

*Water your landscapes not your roads!* aims to reduce soil erosion in the region by reinforcing the key grading techniques and principles presented by Col – a respected soil conservation expert with 40 years experience – at a series of popular grader and soil erosion workshops held across the SA Arid Lands region in the past 12 months. Soil erosion is a naturally occurring process that can be accelerated through changes in land use, vegetation cover and drainage patterns. One of the biggest causes of accelerated soil erosion is human activity, particularly when behind the wheel of a grader or dozer.

Poor track design and maintenance as well as the use of V-drains, windrows and catch drains can interfere with the natural spread of water, robbing soils of extremely valuable water and starving vegetation, leading to a dry landscape.

Filed during the 2015 workshops, the free DVD walks viewers step by step through best practice grading techniques including: planning new roads, checking over machinery, building and repairing roads,

the dos and don'ts of drainage and how to reinstate a natural floodway.

The use of these best practice techniques stabilises soil, improving water capture and stock feed, while also preventing further erosion and reinstating natural water flow across country. This means the landscape gets more out of each rain, making land more profitable and sustainable.

The DVD also features an in-depth case study from Mt Little Station in the Flinders Ranges, showing that sometimes it is better to shutdown and rehabilitate an inappropriately placed and poorly graded road.

**To get your copy of the *Water your landscapes not your roads!* DVD or to register your interest in future best practice grader and soil erosion workshops contact Lisa Stevens, Regional Landcare Facilitator on 8648 5300.**

SAAL NRM Board, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands, Australian Government



*In 2007 we had a significant rain event, it was something like 5 inches in 24 hours and we thought we'd have feed for the next 12 months... unfortunately most of it just ran off the property and a lot of it is to do with the fact that the tracks just robbed it all and just took it into the creeks and then she was gone, so that made us realise that we needed to start addressing that problem.*

Chris Blackmore, Mt Little Station



Rabbits

# New strain of calici offers hope for rabbit control...

**Land managers across South Australia are being urged to submit dead rabbit samples to assist with tracking the spread of a new rabbit calicivirus strain in Australia. Samples from the pastoral zone will be of particular interest.**

The new strain (Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease virus or RHDV2) was first discovered in Canberra in May 2015.

Since the initial detection in Canberra, RHDV2 has now spread through much of New South Wales and Victoria, with the first cases confirmed in South Australia in December 2015.

It is believed the spread of the disease is occurring mainly through flies and mosquitoes; however, it could also be caused by people moving infected rabbits, contaminated equipment or food.

Testing of Australian dead rabbit samples has revealed the RHDV2 strain detected in Australia is genetically identical to a strain from Portugal and the Azores.

It is not known if this strain of RHDV2 will provide a significant reduction in wild rabbit populations in Australia. However, it has done so in France, Spain, Portugal and Scotland in recent years.

## We need your dead rabbits

In South Australia, samples from dead rabbits are urgently needed to monitor RHDV2 spread.

Since the 1996 release of the original strain of calicivirus (RHDV1) in Australia, samples from the remote areas of South Australia have been uncommon.

With the original strain of calicivirus (RHDV1) still active in the SA Arid Lands region, without dead rabbit samples it can only be assumed which RHDV strain might be impacting properties.

Samples will also help determine which strains are most effective, and at what time of year and where these strains are active.

In a recent case, RHDV2 caused the death of a three year old pet rabbit from Adelaide

despite the rabbit having had annual vaccinations for RHDV1 – its latest only three days before its death from RHDV2.

More broadly, data from rabbit samples can be used to assess the effectiveness of the various rabbit biocontrols currently in existence and to argue for further research to find new biocontrols to benefit Australia's agricultural industries and the environment.

## Integrated rabbit control

In the event RHDV2 does take hold in the SA Arid Lands region, it may significantly enhance the effectiveness of standard rabbit control measures, with less rabbits around to survive a control program and reinfest properties.

Late summer/autumn is an ideal time to implement a broadscale warren ripping program – with follow up fumigation of any re-openings – as rabbit numbers tend to be at their lowest at this time.

It is best conducted under hot, dry conditions to ensure few rabbits are out of the warren above ground, and an effective collapse of the warren structure.

For long term suppression, it is recommended that landholders get rabbits down by over 95 per cent.

Land managers may also have access to 1080 oat baits through Natural Resources SA Arid Lands; contact the pest management team on 8648 5300.

## Further information

**David Peacock, Research Officer, PIRSA Biosecurity SA 8303 9504 or david.peacock@sa.gov.au**

*PIRSA Biosecurity SA, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands*

## HOW TO PROVIDE A SAMPLE

Look out for dead rabbits that otherwise look healthy. This may be evidence of an RHDV1 or RHDV2 outbreak. Collect a carcass (or its liver or hind leg) and store it, with its source location and date, in a plastic bag in the freezer.

Record any observations. For example: "I used to count 50 rabbits driving from the gate to the house and in the last week I have seen none" or "I found a number of dead rabbits but there still seems to be heaps of live rabbits about."

Once you have a rabbit sample in the freezer, please contact Natural Resources SA Arid Lands pest management team on 8648 5300 to arrange collection or drop-off of the sample. They can then contact Biosecurity SA to organise getting the sample to Adelaide for testing.

Land managers will be advised of the results, which could confirm RHDV1 or RHDV2 activity in their area.





## ...as original calici strain linked to small mammal recovery

Dusky Hopping-mouse

**As we wait to see how the recently detected strain of rabbit calicivirus takes hold in Australia, the effects of the original strain have been linked to the dramatic recovery of four small mammals over the last two decades, three of them threatened species.**

The research analysed small mammal data collected since 1970 and stored in the SA Government's Biological Survey Database, the Atlas of Living Australia, and other published and unpublished reports, as well as data from long-term monitoring sites.

Distribution records were compared between the 26-year period before the 1996 calicivirus (RHDV1) outbreak and the 19 years since, focussing on the SA Arid Lands region and on species for which there was good coverage of data.

Threatened rodents – Plains Mouse (*Pseudomys australis*) and Dusky Hopping-mouse (*Notomys fuscus*) – increased their distribution by 241 and 365 per cent respectively during the first 14 years following calicivirus.

Dusky-hopping Mice have undergone dramatic population booms in the Strzelecki Desert during the last decade, spilling over into the North Flinders and North East Pastoral districts and western New South Wales.

Similarly, Spinifex Hopping-mice were previously recorded in sandy habitats in the north-west of the region, but have increased their distribution to the south. Before calicivirus, the most southern records of this species were from near William Creek – now they've been recorded just 75 kilometres north of Port Augusta.

But it was another threatened species, the Crest-tailed Mulgara (*Dasymercus cristicauda*), that made the largest increase, with a near 70-fold increase in distribution after the calicivirus outbreak.

This small carnivorous marsupial was only recorded within the core of the Simpson Desert between 1970 and 1995, despite historical records showing that it had a much wider distribution.

However, in the 19 years since calicivirus, the mulgara has reoccupied much of its former range along the Oodnadatta and Birdsville Tracks; within the last year, it has been recorded as far away as Lake Callabonna, to the north-east of the Gammon Ranges.

The absence of these mammals prior to 1996 at long-term monitoring sites at Roxby Downs, the Gammon Ranges and Montecollina Bore in the Strzelecki Desert give us certainty that the changes are real and that the mammals were not simply there but undetected prior to calicivirus.

Rabbit, cat and fox population densities were also compared before and after the release of calicivirus.

The recovery of these mammals corresponds to the dramatic collapse and sustained suppression of rabbit populations following the original 1995 calicivirus outbreak. The research also suggests that the drop in rabbit populations has led to a reduction in their main predators – the feral cat and fox.

The study points to a range of changes stemming from calicivirus which are of benefit for small mammals. These not only include the expected recovery of vegetation, leading to increased food and shelter, but also more complex effects such as lower numbers of introduced predators.

With the small mammal recoveries occurring during a period of relatively dry conditions and prior to the 2010-2012 years of record-breaking rainfall, the good conditions brought about by rainfall are unlikely to be the main driver of these dramatic changes.

The study highlights the cost effective and wide-ranging benefits that rabbit biocontrol has brought to Australia's environment and agricultural industries.

It is hoped that the outbreak of the new RHDV2 strain in Australia may further the recovery of these mammals and other species.

The study suggests that the Plains Mouse, Dusky Hopping-mouse and Crest-tailed Mulgara no longer qualify as vulnerable on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species.

The research has been published in the journal *Conservation Biology*: see [onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cobi.12684/abstract](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cobi.12684/abstract)

### Further information

**Contact Reece Pedler, Threatened Fauna Officer, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands 8648 5300**

SA Arid Lands NRM Board, DEWNR, PIRSA Biosecurity SA, Ecological Horizons, Envisage Environmental Services, Australian Government



Brushtail Possum

## Brushtail Possums (Virda) settle into Ikara

Katherine Moseby, *Ecological Horizons*

It's been nearly a year since 79 Brushtail Possums (Virda) were translocated from the Yookamurra Sanctuary into the Flinders Ranges National Park. With more than half of those possums radiocollared, monitoring is well underway and we are beginning to learn more about their behaviours as they settle back into an area where they've been absent for 75 years.

Since their release radiocollared possums have been checked daily and then weekly to determine survival and habitat use. Cage traps have also been set at the base of occupied trees to catch the possums and check their health and reproductive status.

### Reproduction

Although temperatures regularly exceed 40 degrees, adult possums continued to breed and maintain weight through the summer months. All females have produced pouch young with many of those now dispersed from their mothers. Observations of several collared juvenile possums by PhD student Hannah Bannister (Adelaide University) have found that they remain in the pouch for several months before being carried around on their mother's back. They then continue to follow their mother around from tree to tree before gradually dispersing. Recently, we captured our first new Flinders born possum with her own pouch young suggesting that the next generation of possums is starting to emerge.

### Behaviour, habitat and diet

Early monitoring indicates that the possums prefer to shelter in tree hollows in River Red Gum and rough-barked Coolibah trees. Diet analysis results are not yet available but the possums have been observed feeding on the leaf tips of mallee trees and on River Red Gum leaves.

### Range

Nine of the possums have been fitted with GPS collars to track their movement. So far we have found female possums to be fairly sedentary, travelling up to 400 metres along creeklines. Male possums are more wide-ranging with distances of several kilometres reported. This is consistent with their promiscuous mating system where males find and mate with many different females.



## STOP PRESS

Donors and dignitaries gather at Wilpena Pound in early May as 15 additional Western Quolls (Idnya) flew in from Western Australia for release into the Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park in May.

They join an estimated 150 quolls now in the area which includes second and third generation individuals.

This was the third and final release of quolls as part of this ambitious reintroduction project which brought together the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered Species, and WA Department of Parks and Wildlife.

Monitoring will continue for another two years to assess whether the quolls have been able to establish a sustainable population and we will bring you news on how they are faring in a future edition of *Across The Outback*.

Quoll release



Katherine Moseby, Reintroduction Project Coordinator, prepares a quoll for release



## FURTHER INFORMATION

Subscribe to Idnya & Virda e-News for a more detailed email update on the Idnya and Virda progress. Send an email with the subject: "Quoll update" to [SAAridlands.sa.gov.au](mailto:SAAridlands.sa.gov.au)

Hannah Bannister

## Mortalities

Survival rates are generally high. In the last month we have seen some possums killed by cats and possibly quolls. This corresponds with late summer and a decline in rabbit numbers, a time of low food availability for predators.

## Fox control

Foxes are a significant predator of possums at other release sites. Our results suggest that the fox control conducted through the Bounceback program has enabled the possums to survive after release and establish home ranges. Long term survival is now likely to depend on sufficient food resources being available, particularly during drought conditions.

The return of the Virda to Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park is made possible through a unique partnership between FAME and DEWNR who teamed with the Australian Wildlife Conservancy for the source population. A further reintroduction is planned in June.

Thanks to the many volunteers, contractors, donors, land managers and partners of *Bounceback* and FAME for their support for this project.

## ABOUT THE VIRLDA

The Brushtail Possum was once common in the rocky ranges and along creeklines in the arid interior of South Australia. Its numbers have declined since European settlement.

Prior to the introduction the most northerly populations in South Australia were found at Quorn in the southern Flinders Ranges.

In the Ikara-Flinders Ranges region, the possum – known by its Adnyamathanha name of Virda – is thought to have become extinct in the 1940s.

Exact reasons for the decline are unknown but are likely to include predation by foxes; habitat

degradation through vegetation clearance; and overgrazing by domestic and introduced herbivores.

Possums were a favoured food source for Aboriginal communities; on moonlit nights they would knock them out of trees with sticks or remove them from dens using smoke, or later, axes. Possum skins were used by Adnyamathanha as blankets while plucked fur was used to make string (Ita).

Despite being considered a pest in urban areas, possum populations are considered stable in only two regions outside of Adelaide: Kangaroo Island and the South East.

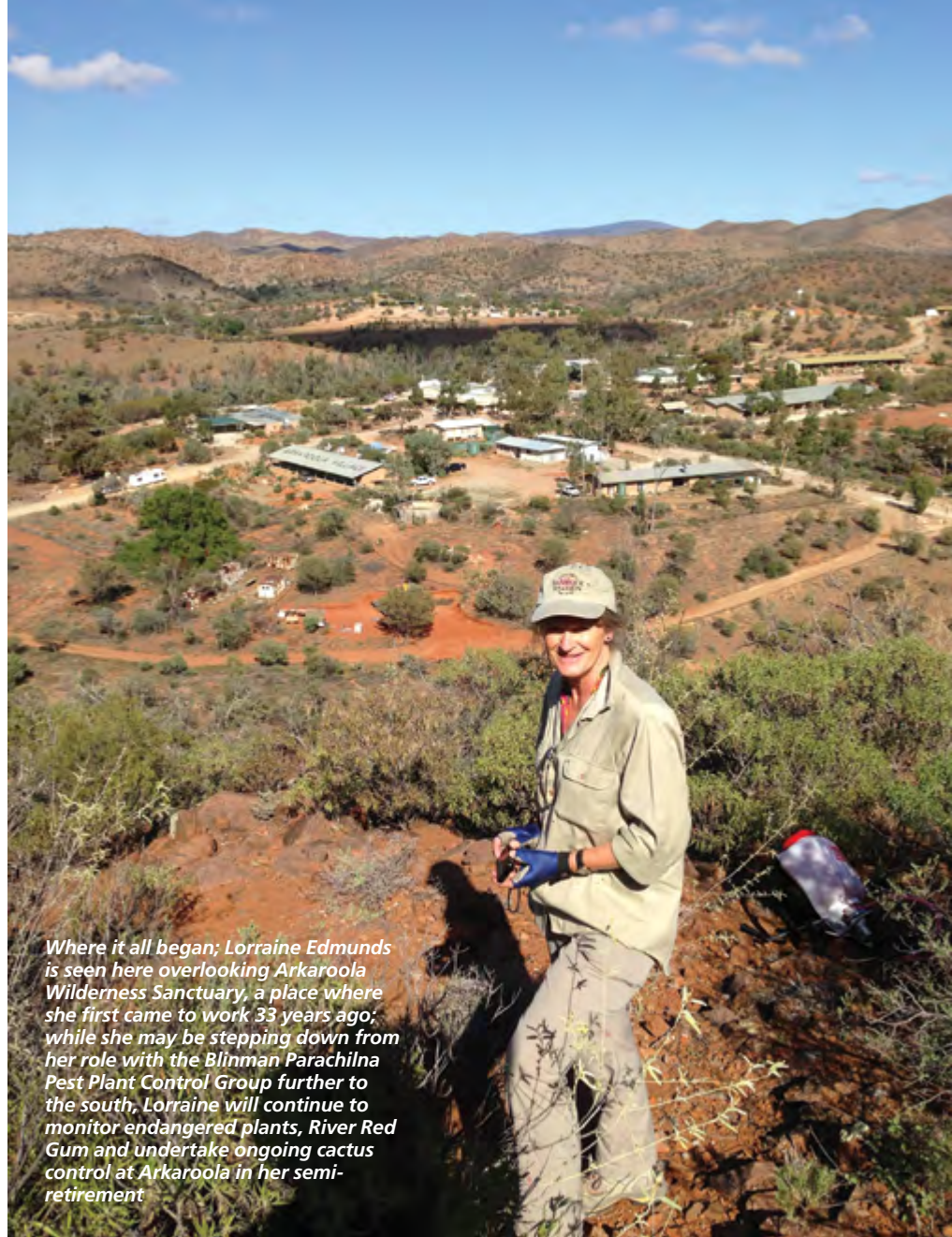


FAME has been raising the funds to support the return of the Western Quoll and Brushtail Possum. We rely on public donations for ongoing operational support. Donations can be made by visiting [fame.org.au](http://fame.org.au) or contact [fame@fame.org.au](mailto:fame@fame.org.au) for more information.



## Cactus group starts a new chapter

For many years *Across The Outback* has been sharing the work of the Blinman-Parachilna Pest Plant Control Group and their long battle with Wheel Cactus (and Oleander) control in the North Flinders district. Now this 14 year partnership between volunteers and pastoralists confronts a new challenge as Lorraine Edmunds retires from the group's coordination role. Here we share excerpts from a conversation with Lorraine where she reflects on the group – from its humble beginnings to its proudest achievements – and her hopes for the future.



*Where it all began; Lorraine Edmunds is seen here overlooking Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary, a place where she first came to work 33 years ago; while she may be stepping down from her role with the Blinman Parachilna Pest Plant Control Group further to the south, Lorraine will continue to monitor endangered plants, River Red Gum and undertake ongoing cactus control at Arkaroola in her semi-retirement*

The story really begins in 1989 when floodwaters spread Wheel Cactus throughout the creeks and tributaries in the North Flinders. Fast forward some 10 years later and a number of landholders in the Blinman area, particularly John and Jan Henery (Alpana Station), noticed a dramatic increase in Wheel Cactus.

"Its range and numbers just exploded and they were feeling pretty anxious and overwhelmed by the apparent scale of it," explained Lorraine.

An initial grant in 2002 of \$30,000 led to the formation of a local group to look at the problem – and ultimately to Lorraine in 2003. She was a natural fit. She had left the role of senior ranger for the Flinders Ranges National Park – through which she was known to many of the local landholders – and was herself a local resident.

Despite initial efforts to survey local landholders and map the problem, it wasn't until the group contracted pest controller Frank Bernhardt that the extent of the infestation became apparent.

"We really didn't know what we were up against until we put people on the ground to do that initial knockdown. That's when we got some sense of just how widespread and incredibly difficult to reach it was.

"We would see hundreds of them in a stand and it was a sickening feeling to see what was being unleashed on this beautiful landscape.

"I likened it to the rabbit of the pest plant world; it almost seemed too big to have any hope that we could ever do anything with it."

But a collective love of the landscape and the thought of containing the core infestation kept the group going.

Over the next 10 years, Lorraine worked tirelessly to coordinate cactus control in the area through what became known as the Blinman Parachilna Pest Plant Control Group (BPPPCG), preparing funding applications, coordinating contractors, establishing partnerships between largely Adelaide-based volunteer groups and local pastoralists, and later investigating and trialling biological controls.



**Left: Wheel Cactus collapse by Cochineal, Gum Creek Station**

**Above: Australian Retired Persons Association volunteers transport Cochineal**

And, while the group's activities may have been concentrated on a 400 square kilometre pocket of the Flinders Ranges, they were having far-ranging influence.

Lorraine was sponsored by the SA Arid Lands NRM Board to speak at weeds conferences in Adelaide and Christchurch; contributed to local, state and national cactus plans, networks and taskforces; wrote articles; held countless media interviews; and led television crews and funding bodies on site visits.

On behalf of the Group, Lorraine accepted the State Landcare Award in 2009 and represented South Australia with Warren and Barb Fargher (Wirrealpa Station) in Canberra in the national awards.

***It is no understatement to say that the work of this small group contributed to putting cactus on the state and national agenda, helping drive funds for cactus control in other NRM regions, and influencing the listing of Opuntia cactus as one of the nation's worst weeds through the Weeds of National Significance program.***

"The influence that we had and the 14-year staying power of the group and the volunteers are our greatest achievements and examples of what community and volunteers working together can achieve. "When we started, Wheel Cactus just wasn't on anyone's radar. We took the lead; we were advocates, making people aware of the invasive potential of this weed."

By 2012 the volunteers had removed a six kilometre infestation of Oleander from Parachilna Gorge; contributed 15,000 hours of labour; and determinedly injected cactus on over 30 square kilometres of pastoral properties, returning year upon year to conduct follow up treatment.

In total the in-kind landholder and volunteer contribution was estimated at \$500,000. Not bad for \$800,000 of State and Australian Government funding.

Lorraine concedes that funding is a challenge.

"It can be difficult to keep funding agencies interested so that they keep investing in our efforts and we continue to have money for contractors and chemical and for supporting volunteers.

"It's also difficult when you know you've got at least 25 years of seed in the soil and your landholders and volunteers are all aging."

Novelty has often been key and the group is well known for Frank and Lorraine's ingenious method of cactus removal – by abseiling the steep cliff-faces of the Flinders.

"We went after specific funding for that aspect of the bigger program," Lorraine recalls. "I think we got three lots, two from the Australian Government and one from the State over three years, and they loved it because it was so novel and ambitious."

Today the latest novelty for the group is in the form of Cochineal, a tiny cactus-feeding insect which has been knocking Wheel Cactus flat across the pastoral properties.

Lorraine believes cochineal will provide the group with the best opportunity it will have to control Wheel Cactus on those properties where infestation has been greatest.

Pastoralists, volunteers and contractors have now turned their hand to assisting its spread, establishing nurseries to cultivate the Cochineal strain and transporting it to cactus pads across the properties where it will find plants that are often missed in what is extremely challenging terrain.

"I think we're pretty lucky with the Opuntias because of the biocontrols we now have which give us some real hope for long term control that is not so dependent on high levels of funding.

"While the Cochineal will be self-sustaining in the short-term, the real challenge will be keeping it going once Wheel Cactus numbers have really collapsed."

As she hands the reins over to other members of the group, Lorraine acknowledges that stepping away will be hard.

"I won't be completely letting go; it's just a series of steps back I suppose. I will always be interested, and will probably continue to have some involvement. It's been such an inspiring program and I'm genuinely interested to see what continues to happen.

"I still have that very deep connection working or volunteering in the Flinders will remain a part of my life."

**The SA Arid Lands NRM Board would like to thank Lorraine and the tremendous efforts of her and the Blinman Parachilna Pest Plant Control Group over the past 14 years. We wish her well in her semi-retirement!**

## WHO ARE THE BLINMAN PARACHILNA PEST PLANT CONTROL GROUP?

The Blinman Parachilna Pest Plant Control Group is made up of volunteers from the Blackwood Church of Christ, Australian Retired Persons Association, Toyota Landcruiser Club of SA, Mitsubishi Club of SA, Adelaide Bushwalkers Club, Overland 4WD Club, Four Seasons Bushwalking Club, and a group of volunteers who annually visit Oratunga Station; 10 pastoral stations (Moolooloo, Alpana, Gum Creek, Willow Springs, Wirrealpa, Angorichina, Oratunga, Mt Falkland, Motpena and Commodore Stations); and the Blinman Progress Association. The Group also acknowledges critical support from Bernhardt's Feral Pest and Weed Control, Roger Christopherson for his work with Cactoblastis and Cochineal, and the Angorichina Tourist Village.



**Friends of Flinders Ranges National Park volunteers Vince Monterola, Frank Williams, Trevor Coleman and Peter Buckland with visiting conservation volunteer Holly Almond (second from right)**

## Flinders Ranges Friends celebrate 20 years

Three Presidents whose terms collectively span 20 years jointly cut a giant birthday cake to mark 20 years of the Friends of Flinders Ranges National Park at a special celebration held in Adelaide in February.

Among the 40 people helping to celebrate were the inaugural President Athol Jackson and his wife Jan, the group's first Secretary Lorraine Edmunds, a further 12 of the group's original members, and past and present Park staff.

Outgoing President Tony Bott guided a team of presenters through a reminiscence of the group's highlights over their 20 year contribution to the park.

*Among the highlights was the restoration of many buildings at the Wilpena Homestead precinct, rebuilding the dry stone garden wall at Apealinna ruins, reconstruction of the century old shepherds hut east of Oraparinna, and hosting the Friends of Parks Forum in 2008.*

Service Pins from DEWNR and Certificates of Appreciation from the Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation were presented to 17 members celebrating 20 years of service, and to 12 members marking 10 years of service.

Former Senior Ranger Darren Crawford proposed a toast to the group and praised members for the excellent contribution to a wide range of projects that have helped preserve the natural and built heritage of the Park.

In responding to the toast incoming President Vince Monterola said that the hard work of members was a labour of love that was rewarded by the knowledge that park visitors in years to come will still be able to appreciate the wonders of the park which have been so dear to members for decades.

We hope that the next 20 years will be as productive as the last.

[www.friendsofflindersranges.org.au](http://www.friendsofflindersranges.org.au)



**From left, Helen Monterola, Barbara Packer, Don Ransom, and Tricia Bott.**



# Former copper returns as Witjira National Park volunteer

Dalhousie Springs

Former police officer, Geoff Eaton, volunteered his time at Dalhousie Springs in the Witjira National Park in September, returning to an old stomping ground to help welcome visitors and maintain campsites as part of the Campground Host program.

Each year volunteers from across the state and around the country travel to South Australia's iconic National Parks as part of the Department of Environment's Campground Host program.

The program allows volunteers to stay on park and help rangers manage visitors during peak tourism seasons and with the implementation of their work plans and general maintenance.

"I was stationed at Oodnadatta in 1968 in my early days in the South Australian Police and there were many opportunities to get out in what is now the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands and Witjira National Park," said Geoff.

"We used to do 10 patrols across to the Western Australian border and then track along the Northern Territory border back down through Dalhousie and home to Oodnadatta.

"I got back up there around eight years ago with my youngest son Jarrod – that was the first time I had been back at Dalhousie Springs [in Witjira National Park] for 40 odd years.

"The place has changed a lot since it was a working station."

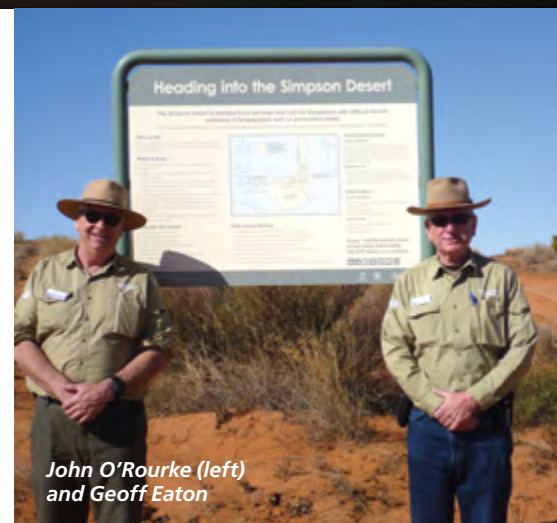
One of the benefits of becoming a Campground Host is getting to explore the more remote and unusual areas of the parks with the rangers, something that was one of Geoff's many highlights.

"[Senior Ranger] Frank Lyman took me to many places that I would not have otherwise experienced and I managed to get a few flights over the park, visiting locations that I would not have seen as a normal visitor."

"I would certainly recommend campground hosting to anyone thinking of becoming a volunteer – you meet such a variety of people and many characters and spend enjoyable nights sitting around campsites talking to visitors."

*"The interaction with the rangers adds to the experience and you can also help the visitors have a great time as well."*

"It's an excellent opportunity to visit various parts of the state and I certainly will be doing it again."



John O'Rourke (left) and Geoff Eaton

Thanks to Geoff and John and Susan O-Rourke who shared the hosting duties.

**For more information or to get involved with the program contact Lyn Newman 0467 777 972.**

**Campground Hosts can volunteer at many parks across the state; in the SA Arid Lands region this includes Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park, Gawler Ranges National Park, the Innamincka Regional Reserve, Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park and Witjira National Park.**



Canid Pest Ejector demonstration on Teetulpa Station

# New tool for fox and wild dog control

**Eighty-one landholders received a hands on demonstration of the newest tool for controlling wild dogs and foxes, the Canid Pest Ejector. The demonstrations delivered by Wild Dog Project officers were held as part of Biteback’s bi-annual injection services in the Kingoonya, Gawler Ranges, North Flinders and North East Pastoral districts during April and May.**

The Canid Pest Ejector (CPE), which has been registered for use in Australia by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority, is a spring-loaded device that uses a bait head and a 1080 poison capsule to administer the dose into the mouth of a fox or wild dog when the bait head is pulled.

Highly target specific to foxes and wild dogs, the devices can only be activated by animals with a jaw pull strength of greater than 1.6 kilograms thereby limiting off-target mortalities.

Unlike meat baits the ejectors are fixed in position by being inserted into the ground and cannot easily be moved from their location, and while the ejectors remain fully toxic for extended periods when they are set, they can quickly be deactivated rendering them harmless.

The CPE provides an additional tool that can be used in conjunction with normal baiting in areas of high wild dog activity.

The CPE is also an ideal device for using in areas where working dogs are operating; landholders need to know where they are located so they may deactivate them before working in the area.

Dummy pepper capsules are also available that can be used to train working and pet dogs not to pull on the device.

It is also recommended that the devices are checked every few weeks to see if they are being triggered and to replace any used capsules.

Warning signs and neighbour notification provisions are still legally required, as per current baiting practices, and training will be required before using.

Landholders that missed out on training at the last injection services can see the devices in action at trapper trainings in the Kingoonya and North Flinders districts in late May and early June, and at future injection services in the spring.

Natural Resources SA Arid Lands is currently selling the CPEs at a subsidised price of \$37.70 through Drought Assistance Funding; they can be ordered in the same way as manufactured baits. The capsules used in the device are currently sold at the full price of \$66 for 50 capsules.

**For more information on Canid Pest Ejectors or to order your devices and capsules contact the Wild Dog Management Team, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands 8648 5300.**

*SAAL NRM Board, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands, Livestock SA, Australian Government*

## IN BRIEF

### MAPPING A SUCCESS

A big thank you to the 73 per cent of properties inside (south of) the Dog Fence who sent in their maps with wild dog sightings. This is the most maps that have been returned since Biteback started!

The data provided is important in providing a snapshot of dog movements across the region and highlights hot spots which helps the Wild Dog Management Team focus their efforts. Feedback on the mapping was provided to landholders at recent injection services.

### LOCAL AREA PLANNING (LAP) GROUPS

Local Area Plans, which outline the minimum control efforts for each of the 21 Local Area Planning Groups that operate inside the Dog Fence have been sent out to LAP Group members in the Kingoonya and Gawler Ranges districts. Members of the groups who have yet to return the plan are asked to review, sign and return them to the Wild Dog Management Team as soon as possible.

### TRAPPING WORKSHOPS

Following last year’s highly successful trapping workshops, Paul Billsborough (Wild Pest Management) is returning to deliver two more workshops in the Kingoonya and North Flinders districts.

The two day workshops at Commonwealth Hill Station on 23 & 24 May and Oraparinna on 31 May & 1 June will cover tools, tips and techniques for trapping. This includes information on basic equipment for trapping, using wild dogs as lures, trap setting and your legal responsibilities.

If you miss out on these workshops, funding for two more trapper workshops in the next financial year has been approved – so keep an eye out for dates in the future.

**Contact the Wild Dog Management Team 8648 5300 for more information.**



## CONNECTED TO COUNTRY OUT NOW!

The latest edition of *Connected to Country* was released in April.

This newsletter is a space where we share the variety of stories and natural resources management activities that are occurring on traditional lands across the SA Arid Lands region.

In the third edition, we hear from Theresa Bottrell and Anita Paterson on what it means to them to have the Yandruwandha Yawarrawarrka's Native Title claim upheld; Wangkangurru Yarluyandi women Valerie Naylon-Fuschtei and Jean Barr-Crombie on respecting traditional knowledge and getting out on country; and Uncle Mark McKenzie and Regina McKenzie, both Kuyani Adnymathanha people, on the co-naming of Ikara Flinders Ranges National Park and winning the 2015 Premier's NRM Award for Aboriginal Leadership.

Visit [www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/aridlands](http://www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/aridlands) to download the latest edition.

# Across The Outback enters the digital age

*Across The Outback* subscribers now have an opportunity to get their news online with the publication now being produced in an e-newsletter format emailed direct to your computer.

The inaugural, online edition of the *Across The Outback* newsletter – a publication which has been keeping the SA Arid Lands community informed of government activities which affect them for 25 years – was introduced last November.

The new online edition of *Across The Outback* charts new territory for this publication.

With just the click of the mouse readers are now able to access the information that interests them and, in turn, built-in metrics will tell us what articles are grabbing your attention so we can continue to understand our readers and improve their reading experience.

Our goal is to widen the readership of this important publication and, in time, we hope to add opportunities for our readers to directly engage with us through the content.

Of course, we recognise that not everyone wants to read *Across The Outback* online.

***Hard copies will continue to be produced and, for those who were already receiving Across The Outback via email, we have included a link to the PDF in the online version so you can continue to access the publication in that manner.***

*Across The Outback* first rolled off the press in 1990 as *Outback*, published by the then Department of Lands on behalf of the Pastoral Board for the South Australian pastoral industry.

Over 76 editions, the publication has seen changing covers and faces, and changes to government and departments, but its commitment to keeping the SA Arid Lands community informed of government activities which affect them remains the same.

And it remains the only publication that covers and centres on the SA Arid Lands region.

*Across The Outback* is currently mailed to about 1500 subscribers – through email and via snail mail – and while its readership is many and varied, and includes conservation, recreation and tourist groups, its natural resources management focus has meant its core readership remains the region's pastoral community.

Indeed, a 2012 survey of 192 pastoral leases funded by the SA Arid Lands (SAAL) Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board revealed 85 per cent subscribe to *Across The Outback*.

### To make the change...

To subscribe to the e-*Across The Outback* If you do not currently subscribe to *Across The Outback* please visit [www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/aridlands/news/subscribe](http://www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/aridlands/news/subscribe), indicate your preference for electronic or hard copy and submit the online form.

To swap from hard copy to e-*Across The Outback* If you currently receive a hard copy and would prefer to receive it via email please email [saaridlands@sa.gov.au](mailto:saaridlands@sa.gov.au) with the subject 'Transfer to e-ATO'. Please include your name and email address as well as the address to which the hard copy is mailed (so we can find you and remove you from our hard copy mailing list).

### For up to the minute news...

 The Natural Resources SA Arid Lands Facebook page is the best place for the latest news on natural resources management and other activities in the SA Arid Lands region. This is a great place to find out about workshops and events, race days, our volunteer activities and, this year, regular updates on the impacts of rainfall on Lake Eyre-Kati Thanda. And if you or your community group have news you'd like us to share visit [www.facebook.com/naturalresourcesaaridlands](http://www.facebook.com/naturalresourcesaaridlands)



## ACROSS THE OUTBACK

*Across the Outback* is prepared and edited by the Communications team, Natural Resources SA Arid Lands, a division of the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources.

It is currently jointly funded by the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board; Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources; the Pastoral Board; and Biosecurity SA (a division of Primary Industries and Regions SA).

Comments and suggestions are always welcome.

Please contact  
jenny.barker@sa.gov.au or 8463 3354



National  
Landcare  
Programme



Government of  
South Australia

# Introducing your local Community Engagement Officers

The region's six districts each have a new dedicated Community Engagement Officer. As well as providing important executive support to the six local NRM Groups, these expanded roles now service their wider districts with assistance with community engagement and development, Aboriginal partnerships, volunteer support and projects, and natural resources management extension work.

Each of the CEOs will provide access to programs, initiatives, activities and information, as well as being the link to key people working in different areas of our region. A passionate group of professionals, they pride themselves on building great relationships and involving community in all aspects of NRM activity across the region. Keep an eye out for them in your district or contact them on 8648 3300.

### Jo-Anna (Jo) Skewes Maree-Innamincka NRM District

After completing my degree in Environmental Management at Flinders University, I went to Urrbrae TAFE for a more hands on experience and to complete a Certificate III in Conservation and Land Management. I have worked as an On Ground Team member at Greening Australia and Trees For Life as well as for Kathmandu outdoor centre. I've also completed a Postgraduate Certificate in Project Management. I enjoy getting my hands dirty in the veggie patch, working with volunteers in bushcare and discovering hidden gems while hiking, camping and exploring the world!

### Lelia (Lil) Kamphorst Marla-Oodnadatta NRM District

I am extremely excited about the opportunity to roll around in, and get to know, such an iconic part of Australia. Being from a farm in northern NSW which grows better rocks than anything, I love the Australian bush but have also lived and travelled overseas. My background is in Geographical Sciences and I've just finished a Masters in Environmental Education. I love cooking, bushwalking and fishing – the latter only if I am successful and can eat it!

### Louise (Lou) Gavin North East Pastoral and Gawler Ranges NRM Districts

I have been living and working in the region for 13 years, firstly as a primary school teacher in Port Augusta and then in community engagement roles in natural resources management. I've also completed a Postgraduate Certificate in Rangelands Management. I have responsibility for two NRM Groups and for developing a strategy for involving schools in natural resources management. Part of the role will be to support the team to adapt it across their districts. I enjoy gardening and running with my dog Simmo.

### Sharn Gilmour Kingoonya NRM District

I have spent the past eight years in and around Byron Bay where I studied and worked at the Southern Cross University. I have been a part of teaching within the environmental school and led student research overseas.

My past research projects have involved local community and tourism in association with national parks and world heritage. I also have connections with the forestry world.

My interests include most things involving the beach, live music, gardening and cooking and I'm looking forward to taking up paddle boarding, hiking and bird watching.

### Matt Westover North Flinders NRM District

I completed a degree in biodiversity, environmental and park management in 2009. After that I worked in the State Flora Nursery at Belair National Park before starting in the SAAL region as the Assistant NRM Officer in 2011. Over that time I've worked across most of the region on different projects. I have also had short stints working on the Bounceback program. Outside of work you will probably find me at the cricket, playing tennis or fishing out on my kayak. I am excited to be back focussing on the North Flinders district.

### Heather Miller Team Leader Partnerships and Community Engagement

Many people will know me from the six years I spent managing our region's wild dog programs, 13 years living in South Australia's pastoral region, or from my nine years managing staff at the Port Augusta Outdoor Education Centre. I also have a Postgraduate Certificate in Rangeland Management as well as diplomas in project management and business management. I'm passionate about hearing the voices of arid land community and supporting them with their issues and I look forward to leading and lending support to this enthusiastic team.