

Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board

# Performance report

Quarter 3 | January - March 2022

*Outcomes aligned with the 2021-22 annual business plan investment and priorities*



# From the General Manager

*I am pleased to present the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board (MRLB) quarterly Performance Report for the third quarter of 2021/2022.*

*This report summarises the performance and activities over the past three months and tracks progress towards delivering the investment and priorities as outlined in the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board Annual Business Plan.*

*It provides the regular review of programs, services and projects and also highlights achievements, key partnerships and other related matters that have occurred during the period.*

*This report is one of the organisation's key reporting tools used to deliver performance related information to board members, the organisation and the wider community.*

*I hope that you will find its content valuable and informative.*



Andrew Meddle  
General Manager













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\*note that budget may be different to that of the Business Plan, due to additional income being received or carry-over of funds from prior year.

# 1. Executive Summary

In quarter 3 of 2021-22, the following progress has been made and program delivery is **on track** for the financial year.

Strategic Priority	Annual Business Plan Programs	Program Strategies
 <b>Sustainable agricultural and pastoral landscapes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainable agriculture</li> <li>Farm soils and vegetation management</li> <li>Regional Landcare facilitator</li> <li>Pest plant and animal management</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On track (14)</li> <li>Not started (2)</li> <li>Completed (2)</li> <li>Behind schedule (1)</li> </ul>
 <b>Sustainable water use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainable irrigation</li> <li>Water planning and management</li> <li>Water allocation planning</li> <li>Water literacy</li> <li>Pest plant and animal Management</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On track (14)</li> <li>Not started (1)</li> <li>Completed (1)</li> <li>Behind schedule (1)</li> </ul>
 <b>Healthy rivers, lakes and wetlands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wetlands and floodplain restoration</li> <li>Restoring RAMSAR wetlands</li> <li>Pest plant and animal management</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On track (4)</li> <li>Not started</li> <li>Completed (2)</li> <li>Behind schedule (1)</li> </ul>
 <b>Healthy landscapes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape scale restoration</li> <li>Restoring Iron Grass grasslands</li> <li>Threatened mallee birds</li> <li>Pest plant and animal management</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On track (17)</li> <li>Not started (2)</li> <li>Completed (2)</li> <li>Behind schedule</li> </ul>
 <b>People at the heart of landscape management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grassroots grants</li> <li>Education program</li> <li>Aboriginal partnership program</li> <li>Capacity building and volunteer Support</li> <li>Citizens' science</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On track (29)</li> <li>Not started</li> <li>Completed</li> <li>Behind schedule</li> </ul>
 <b>Foundational programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board leadership and governance</li> <li>Planning and evaluation</li> <li>Customer and business services</li> <li>Communications</li> <li>Council levy collection fees</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On track (25)</li> <li>Not started</li> <li>Completed (4)</li> <li>Behind schedule (1)</li> </ul>



## Highlights Summary

A summary of the key highlights from across the regional priorities:

- Controlling African Lovegrass at a demonstration site in Mount Compass using a roto-wiper with selective herbicide combined with improved grazing management and soil fertility.
- The Automatic Weather Station network's new trial site in Berri has been operating without issue.
- The livestock sector gathered at Kapunda and Keith to engage in a series of discussions about the exciting future for producers with technology implementation at the Livestock Technology Expo event in Kapunda.
- The MRLB's annual fox bait distribution days were held in February to March across 13 sites. More than 9000 baits were sold with 82 landholders engaged.
- A comprehensive rabbit spot lighting count program was conducted over a three week period prior to the K5 release program at five locations.
- The Murraylands and Riverland Pest Plant Action Plan has been finalised and presented to the Board for noting.
- The Marne Saunders Water Forum was held at Cambrai on 25th February, and the community turned out in full. 61 people attended the day to hear about the latest groundwater and streamflow water science.
- The water resource team worked rapidly with the Water Advisory Committee at the start of the year to develop a consultation strategy on drafting changes to the private carryover policy within the River Murray Water Allocation Plan. This quarter has seen a focus on undertaking consultation events across the region with a total of 44 people assisting.
- The final funding recipient within the Water Efficiency Program (WEP) executed their Works and Water Transfer Agreement with the MRLB, meaning all 28 projects are now contracted.
- The MRLB executed the Memorandum of Administrative Arrangement (MoAA) with PIRSA for the delivery of the National Water Grid Authority project (~\$3m) in the Lower Murray Reclaimed Irrigation Areas (LMRIA).
- The MRLB secured more than \$800,000 in funding for the Weed Warriors of our Waterways project through the Landscape Priority Fund.
- A project to reinstate a high-value fast flowing habitat over the 8 km length of the Bookmark Creek anabranch is now underway, funded by the Sustaining Riverland Environments program.
- A recent monitoring survey at Little Frenchmans Creek caught in excess of 200,000 Murray hardyhead in a single night - a completely unprecedented catch in a routine population survey of this kind.
- 210 endangered southern purple-spotted gudgeon (*Mogurnda adspersa*) were translocated into the Greenlands Wetland near Murray Bridge.
- The first field days for our native grassland trials were carried on with the community.
- The River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (RMMAC) ranger team started in mid-March. This is a major milestone in the partnership between RMMAC and the MRLB.
- A meeting was held with the River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (RMMAC) Indigenous Ranger team, to provide an overview of the Living Landscapes project, and our aims for the restoration of this landscape, together with conversations about the protection of cultural heritage.
- A number of sites across Ngarkat Conservation Park that represented a viable fire history were visited and surveyed to assess the species composition and structure that would be suitable for mallee emu wren.
- A focused goat trapping program at Black Hill sleeper track has removed 35 goats from the landscape.
- The Murraylands Young Environmental Leaders (YEL) forum focussed on sustainable water use was a successful day with 28 students from 7 schools across the Murraylands.

- The MRLB is currently leading a large partnership between the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation, the Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board, the Living Murray Program and LaTrobe University to engage the Ngarrindjeri community in turtle conservation.
- Insect Investigators school workshops across South Australia ran 19 sessions online with 17 schools, involving 20 teachers and 285 students from reception to year 8.
- Round 3 Grassroots Grants program was successfully launched and promoted, with 43 grant applications being received and processed.
- A Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool has been purchased to support internal and external customers by recording enquiries.
- The finance team worked with the Investment and Information team to draft the 2022-23 operational plan by establishing the plan budget.
- 12 job vacancies were advertised and 9 were filled.
- A new performance review cycle started and 35% of PRDs were completed by the end of March.
- The MRLB was represented at the Attorney General's department (AGD) cross-agency working group for the state interconnector project.
- The Board approved the first position statement to identify the organisation's aims to support communities, individuals and ecosystems to become climate ready.
- New apps, surveys and improvements for data collection have been developed by the investment and information team to help different teams across the organisation with their field work.

## Risk and Challenges

A summary of the potential risks or key challenges in program delivery this quarter.

Risk	Management Strategy
The optimising ground cover climate benchmarking project is behind schedule as the project partner the MRLB wanted to work with was slow to respond.	A team member has been assigned to get the project back on track in time for reporting.
A few changes to the sustainable agriculture team will make the next few weeks a challenge. Slight risk to project delivery due to staff hand overs.	An adjustment to the distribution of work will ensure tasks stay on track. The recent integration of the sustainable agriculture and sustainable water use teams will provide the opportunity to share resources and deploy staff in the most efficient and effective way.
The requirement to review and draft the carryover policy in the River Murray Water Allocation Plan (WAP) has stretched the capacity of staff who are also delivering a 10-year review of the Mallee WAP.	The review of the Mallee WAP is on schedule to be delivered in the fourth quarter and will remain a focus. The Water Advisory Committee could be used if more time is needed to consider the carryover policy.
Staff taking extended sick leave or who are isolating during peak field work season in the Riverland district can create delays.	MRLB have the request to retain salary savings and will spend on appropriate contractor works to alleviate work plan pressures. Ensure appropriate back up options for possible COVID impacts for high priority deliverables.
<p>The risk of refocusing the Sustainable Water Use program remains current. However with the potential for the MRLB to be involved in the delivery of National Water Grid Authority projects the risk is lessened however unknowns do mean that that forward planning with certainty is a challenge.</p> <p>The MRLB is largely reliant on negotiations occurring at high level before any on-ground project management/delivery opportunities become available.</p> <p>Opportunities with the \$60m on-farm efficiency projects still remain uncertain and this is likely to continue until elections at the Federal level are held.</p>	<p>Positive negotiations between the MRLB and PIRSA have resulted in the MoAA being executed for the National Water Grid Authority project. While this is a great outcome, timelines for the delivery of the project are quite compressed so it will be challenging. The execution of the MoAA means that resourcing considerations can be considered with confidence.</p> <p>MRLB staff will continue to engage proactively with the Department of Environment and Water (DEW) regarding opportunities linked to the Basin Plan.</p>
COVID-19 has continued to be an on-going risk to the delivery of the First Nations project. First Nations are a high-risk group and their communities have been highly impacted with COVID-19 infections. This has resulted in delays to some project activities such as face-to-face meetings and events.	The team has continued to ensure that COVID-19 related protocols are followed, and MRLB remains flexible with project activities, moving to on-line meetings where ever possible, and ensuring that work planning includes adequate time for unforeseen changes to be accommodated without derailing project delivery.
A new mandated supplier for media monitoring has been deemed to be prohibitive financially. As it is mandated that all government agencies use the selected provider, the MRLB now has a reduced capacity to monitor media activity.	Green Adelaide has included landscape boards as a key word search through the new provider and is sharing their media monitoring reports. Therefore MRLB is getting media monitoring close to the same standard as received previously.
The human resources advisor's workload was too high, leading to errors, oversights and stress.	Some human resource administration tasks are being handed over to the administration team. Outsourcing some functions (i.e. Remuneration Level Assessments) needs to be considered, and additional resources for the HR team needs to be provided.

## 2. Performance by Strategic Priority



### Sustainable agricultural and pastoral landscapes

#### Program investment

Program	Levies	External	Total
Sustainable Agriculture	331,655	278,245	609,900
Farms soils and vegetation management	-	441,648	441,648
Regional Landcare Facilitator	-	135,077	135,077
Pest Plant and Animal Management	721,053	175,110	896,163
Program support	492,155	-	492,155
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,544,863</b>	<b>1,030,080</b>	<b>2,574,943</b>

*Program investment as per the 2021-22 Murraylands and Riverland Business plan.*

#### Program Progress Summary

Community interest in events run by the MRLB continue to be high with good attendances and great interest in the topics presented. This was evident in the carbon neutrality AgForum held at Bowhill and the Regenerative Agriculture Communities of Practice Low Rainfall Zone Opportunities project.

Soils is another area of growing interest with soil sampling being undertaken, soils information sessions being planned and recruitment of a soils officer underway. This will enable the collation, communication, education and processing of soil microbiological data for improved production and environmental outcomes in future reporting periods.

Staffing has changed over this period with the departure of the team leader, and a project officer now on extended leave. Work will continue as scheduled with a new staff member having recently joined the team, team leadership being resolved and another member due to join the team in coming weeks.

Pest control programs over this quarter saw a good landholder response with more than 8,000 fox baits sold as part of our annual program. Staff engaged with landholders on rabbit and weed issues, extending the benefits of the program and increasing awareness of the issues in the community.

#### Quarterly Program highlights

- Controlling African lovegrass at a demonstration site in Mount Compass using a roto-wiper with selective herbicide combined with improved grazing management and soil fertility. Fertilising and pasture reseeding to bolster the growth of the existing pasture are due to be completed in April.
- Sadly Robin Tavonesa resigned as the team leader, but fortunately Michael Cutting has moved into a joint role and will lead the team going forward. This will create increased opportunities for collaboration and integration for both the sustainable agriculture and the sustainable water use.
- Denham Ewens has recently joined the team as the Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator/Project Officer while Eliza Reiger is on maternity leave. Denham has already run both the regenerative farming and carbon events which were a great success.



*Photo 1. The work currently getting done of controlling African lovegrass at a demonstration site in Mount Compass.*



*Photo 2. Denham Ewens joined the team as Eliza Reiger's backfill and we would like to welcome him to the team.*

- The sustainable agriculture team has excelled in engaging with landholders and industry groups this quarter, working closely with producers in the region to ensure knowledge is shared and the MRLB's support is shown. The main talking points have been lack of rainfall in the region, trying to understand the role of carbon improvements in soils within the low rainfall zones, as well as the potential opportunities presented by regenerative agriculture. With the events being well attended across the region, the team had the opportunity to network with farming groups, which was challenging during the peak of the pandemic.



*Photo 3. Denham Ewens welcoming attendees on his first field day event*



*Photo 4. The Mallee Coorong Advisory committee's AgForum - Bowhill*

- The soil extension officer recruitment process is well underway, with applicants being shortlisted and interviews to be conducted in April. The activity work plan has been finalised and due for approval and so far MRLB is on track to appoint the successful candidate as soon as possible.
- A future Regional Land Partnerships (RLP) planning meeting was held, with some great project ideas being discussed. With early planning MRLB is preparing for a well-structured application which addresses MRLB priorities as well as being of benefit to our regional landholders.
- The Automatic Weather Station network's new trail site in Berri has been running well so far and arrangements regarding works for the rest of the stations in our region are in progress.
- A number of district officers and sustainable agriculture team members attended community outreach events, sharing a display of information regarding the work of the MRLB and the support offered to landholders. The events were well attended and great conversations were had about pest and land management.



- The livestock sector gathered at Kapunda and Keith to engage in a series of discussions about the exciting future for producers with technology implementation at the Livestock Technology Expo event in Kapunda. Speakers highlighted some of the sector's success stories and areas for improvement to evoke renewed motivation, and MRLB engaged with industry groups and farmers in the region which got some promotion of the MRLB in a recent edition of *Stock Journal*.



Photo 5. Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board's Robin Tavonessa, Murray Bridge, and Shane Mills, Yankalilla.

- Our annual fox bait distribution days were held in February to March across 13 sites. More than 9,000 baits were sold with 82 landholders engaged. The regional fox bait app has been developed and will enable easy collation and mapping of fox baiting across the region.



Photo 6. Mixing 1080 powder to solution is undertaken once or twice a year by our level 3 accredited staff.



Photo 7. Pygmy possums found nesting in letter box at Meningie during a letter drop for fox baiting.

- A comprehensive rabbit spotlighting count program was conducted over a three week period prior to the K5 release program at 5 locations including Humphrey Lane, Garwood Road, Mypolonga, Lavender trail, Kinchina Conservation Park North, Kinchina Conservation Park East, Usher Road and Nicolai Road. Spotlight counts were undertaken to monitor the spread of the virus and also to monitor other control programs being undertaken by National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) and Rural City of Murray Bridge (RCMB). Analysis of results post K5 release clearly indicate a reduction in rabbit population at all sites.
- The district staff had a presence at National Recovery & Resilience Agency Community Outreach Events at Alawoona, Lameroo, Swan Reach, Nildottie and Palmer. All were very well attended by landholders. The district and sustainable agriculture teams had a stall and engaged with more 250 people across the combined events.
- There has been a big focus on targeting summer growing weeds between January and March with many of the team hitting priority weeds and sites to reduce impacts. African lovegrass, silver-leaf nightshade and innocent weed found on roadsides were identified as priorities for managing.

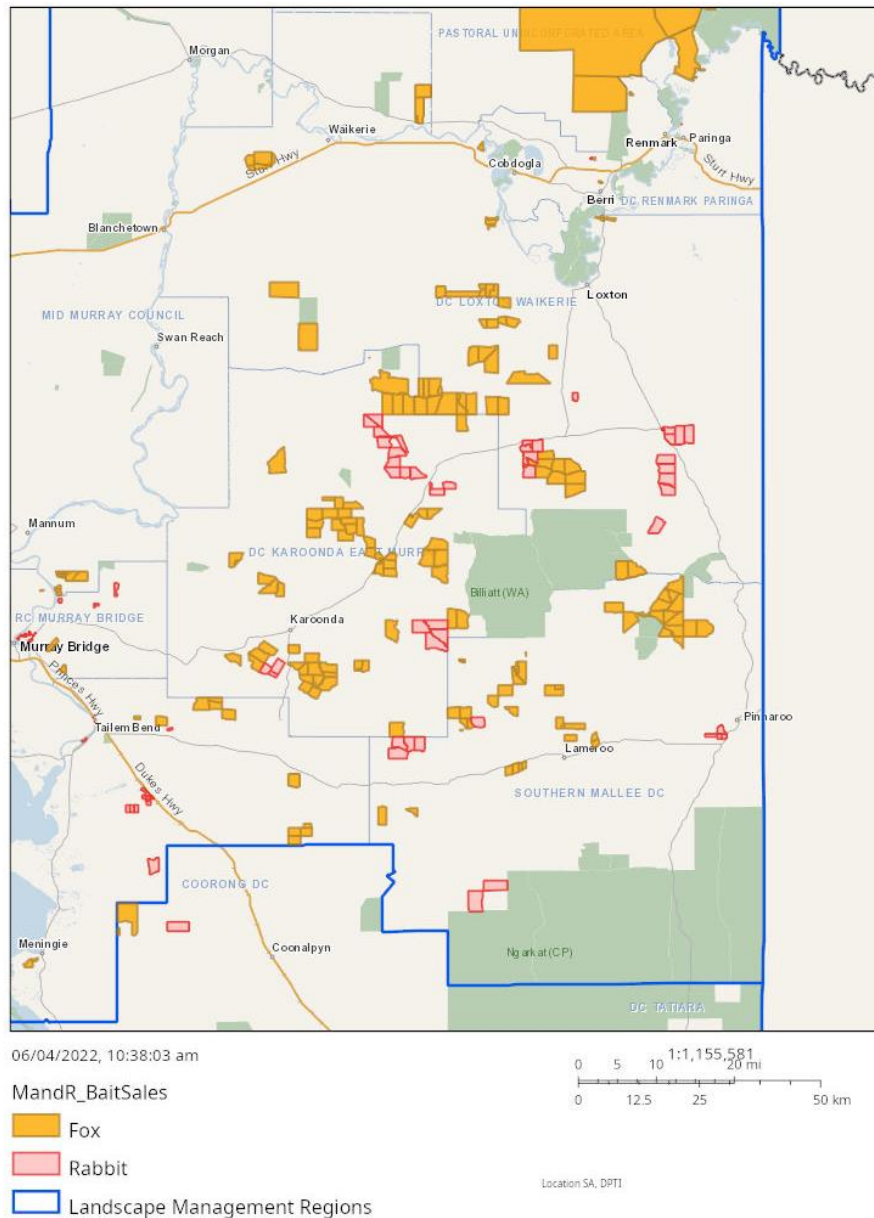


Photo 8. Distribution of fox and rabbit bait sale

- Surveying and control of summer grasses has been a priority since early season media was well received. Successful control efforts at historic buffel grass sites can be seen, with nearly 70% of locations now deemed inactive. The known infestation of coolatai grass in the Riverland has also seen a marked decrease in activity, and whilst survey efforts are finding more African lovegrass locations, control so far is proving effective.
- Two workshops were run in the Riverland to help horticultural growers and dryland farmers to manage prickles. The workshops focused on property hygiene, fox baiting and provided a demonstration of a locally manufactured prickle picker. This proved very popular with landholders and may have provided the manufacturer with several sales. The district team has also invested in one unit, which can be loaned out to landholders.

## Progress on program strategies

Program strategies	Focus Areas*	Status
Monitor regenerative grazing trial sites, engage with landholders, develop case studies and extend results.	3	☑
Investigate regenerative opportunities in low rainfall zones, undertake grower engagement, management, investigation, soil testing, literature review and extension.	3	☑
Manage weather station network.	5	☑
Deliver webinars around the optimisation of ground cover and climate bench marking.	4	○
Monitor the acidic soils in the Mallee trial site, undertake farmer survey, soil testing and extension.	1	☑
Establish and monitor carbon levels (base line and over time) at relevant trial sites	1	☑
Establish and monitor dry saline trial, undertake grower engagement and extension.	4	☑
Work with industry groups on partnered projects including Mallee seeps, and legumes on sands, including trial site monitoring and extension	1	☑
Deliver spring crop walks, including the involvement of Regional Agricultural Landcare Facilitators.	1	☑
Coordinate, guide and implement control programs for identified priority pests across the region.	2	☑
Undertake African lovegrass trial and extension to demonstrate best practice management.	2	☒
Monitor and control of incursions pathways across the district.	2	☑
Provide field officer to manage on-ground works as part of the Southern Mallee Pest and Weed project.	2	😊
Coordinate fox management program, fox bait distribution events and work with the working group to plan and execute the program.	2	😊
Support the wild dog landholder network, provide advice and tools for long-term monitoring and management of wild dogs. Support the baiting program across Ngarkat Conservation Park.	2	○
Assist landholders to control priority weeds.	2	☑
Assist landholders to control priority pest animals including rabbits, goats and deer.	2	☑
Maintain on-farm trials, build relationships with graziers and promote the benefits of managing healthy native grasslands.	4	☑
Promote the production benefits of healthy native grasslands on sheep grazing properties via communication and extension opportunities, events and one-on-one interactions.	3	☑

\*Refer to Appendix 1

Legend ☑ = On Track, ○ = Not Started, ☒ = Behind Schedule, 😊 = Completed



## Sustainable water use

### Program investment

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Program	Levies	External	Total
Sustainable Irrigation	215,756	6,420,372	6,636,128
Water Planning and Management	1,961,328	-	1,961,328
Water Allocation Planning	450,396	-	450,396
Water Literacy	-	-	-
Pest Plant and Animal Management	229,850	54,000	283,850
Program Support	1,330,698	-	1,330,698
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,188,028</b>	<b>6,474,372</b>	<b>10,662,400</b>

*Program investment as per the 2021-22 Murraylands and Riverland Business plan.*

### Program Progress Summary

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The third quarter is not traditionally an active period for on-farm projects due to it coinciding with the peak period of the irrigation season. However a number of key projects have been completed, commenced and agreed upon through the work of the sustainable irrigation team.

Progress has been made on Water Efficiency Program (WEP) projects with a number of participants having now completed all contracted works. The Australian Wine Research Institute (AWRI) Irrigation Benchmarking project has commenced in the Riverland with farm assessments being undertaken on several selected wine grape properties. In partnership with PIRSA, the MRLB will deliver the National Water Grid Authority project. This project focusses on water management in the Lower Murray Reclaimed Irrigation Area (LMRIA) and represents significant investment in the LMRIA over the remainder of the 2021/22 and also 2022/23.

The water literacy focus for this quarter has been the private carryover policy for the River Murray WAP with events and factsheets developed as well as undertaking a Marne Saunders Water Forum. In water planning and management the MRLB has partnered with DEW in undertaking a 10 year review of the Water Allocation Plan (WAP) for the Mallee prescribed wells area. The team has been collating and analysing information regarding water use, allocation, hydrogeology with community feedback to undertake a thorough review of the Mallee Water Allocation Plan which is due to be complete in May.

### Quarterly Program highlights















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- The Marne Saunders Water Forum was held at Cambrai on 25 February and 61 people attended the day to hear about the latest groundwater and streamflow water science. The news wasn't great and it is considered the first of many brave conversations that MRLB will be having with the community in the coming months and years as the MRLB works collaboratively to build resilience into our communities facing climate change challenges.
- Sometimes, even with all the best planning and advice, urgent changes arise such as those involving access to barges to undertake works along the River Murray. This quarter the team worked closely with DEW to make sure that a Water Affecting Activity permit could be processed quickly to allow for shortened timeframes. Though frequent communication with the client, the team was able to process a WAA permit that complied with their work schedule.



- The water resource team worked rapidly with the Water Advisory Committee to develop a consultation strategy on drafting changes to the private carryover policy within the River Murray Water Allocation Plan. This quarter has seen a focus on consultation events across the region (2 online, and 2 in-person events) with a total of 44 people attending. Through a successful partnership with DEW, the community has a number of their river management concerns answered. The team will continue to work with the community in the coming months to finalise the policy based on feedback received through the 2 month statutory consultation process.
- The final funding recipient of the Water Efficiency Program (WEP) executed their Works and Water Transfer Agreement with the MRLB, meaning all 28 projects are now contracted.
- The 5th bi-annual report for the Water Efficiency Program (WEP) was approved by the Department for Water, Agriculture and the Environment (DAWE) enabling the next progress payment to be made while also highlighting the active progress of projects.
- The MRLB executed the Memorandum of Administrative Arrangement (MoAA) with PIRSA for the delivery of the National Water Grid Authority project in the Lower Murray Reclaimed Irrigation Areas (LMRIA).
- Positive media uptake on World Water Day featured Kimbolton Wine's Water Efficiency Program project.

## Progress on program strategies

Program Strategies	Focus Areas*	Status
Monitor streamflow and fish populations in the Marne Saunders Prescribed Water Resource Area and undertake a 20 year review of fish monitoring to date.	3	
Coordinate and engage the Marne Saunders community on the current status of the prescribed water resource.	3	
Coordinate and collect Annual Water Use Surveys and Salinity Samples from the Mallee, Peake Roby and Sherlock, and Marne Saunders prescribed wells/water resource areas.	2	
Implement the River Murray Water Allocation Plan (WAP) specifically, the Environmental Land Management Allocations (ELMA) policy and the upper Pike Extraction Limit.	1	
Undertake a 10 year review of the Water Allocation Plan for the Mallee prescribed wells area.	3	
Investigate pathways to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for water allocation plans in the region.	4	
Coordinate the engagement of First Nations in water planning and management.	3	
Assess and issue water affecting activity permits and provide comments on development applications in relation to the region's water resources.	2	
Support the coordination of bi-monthly Water Advisory Committee meetings.	3	
Produce material to support the community's understanding of policies within water allocation plans, specifically in 2021-22 the updated ELMA policy.	3	
Support the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.	1	
Identify project opportunities that support the adoption of alternative water sources.	2	
Identify project opportunities that deliver sustainable water outcomes.	1	
Support communication and engagement activities that contribute to the community having an improved understanding of water literacy.	3	

<b>Program Strategies</b>	<b>Focus Areas*</b>	<b>Status</b>
Coordinate, guide and implement control programs for identified priority pest plant species.	5	
Support landholders to conduct coordinated pest animal control programs, and investigate options for projects and alternative support.	5	
Plan and complete cost recovery works targeting priority species and locations in a coordinated manner.	5	

*\*Refer to Appendix 1.*

Legend  = On Track,  = Not Started,  = Behind Schedule,  = Completed



## Healthy rivers, lakes and wetlands

### Program investment

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Program	Levies	External	Total
Wetlands and Floodplain Restoration	476,751	1,159,275	1,636,026
Restoring Ramsar Wetlands	-	866,478	866,478
Pest plant and animal management	175,506	-	175,506
Program Support	299,266	-	299,266
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>951,523</b>	<b>2,025,753</b>	<b>2,977,276</b>

*Program investment as per the 2021-22 Murraylands and Riverland Business plan.*

### Program Progress Summary

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The MRLB was successful in securing significant long term funding for projects to undertake aquatic weed control. This funding will enable control work along the river corridor and associated creeks and wetlands along with community engagement and education to ensure the impacts continue beyond the end of the project. Coupled with the use of new technologies and treatments it will enable the weed issues to be addressed before weed infestations spread and become substantially established. Planning is currently underway to undertake this work over the next three years for the most effective outcomes.

The wetlands team has developed a first draft of detailed design drawings and technical specifications for Bookmark Creek. This is a critical component of a DEW project to replace existing infrastructure to reinstate high-value fast flowing habitat for large bodied native fish over the length of the Bookmark Creek anabranch and enable improved watering of adjacent wetlands and floodplains. This design work is the first of a number of other specifications being developed for DEW for other locations and an essential element to the future management of these sites.

Monitoring undertaken this quarter has detected an abundance of the nationally endangered small bodied native fish, Murray hardyhead. This successful result comes from work undertaken by the team in recent years to translocate the species and the success is testament the value of collaboration between agencies and individuals, across state borders for environmental outcomes. This collaborative work continues with a broad range of partners across other species and is likely to yield similar success in future reporting periods.

### Quarterly Program highlights

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- The district team was successful in securing more than \$800,000 in funding to action the Weed Warriors of our Waterways project through the Landscape Priority Fund. This project will enable staff to conduct thorough surveys and follow up along the river corridor and associated creeks and wetlands. A key component will be engaging and educating community groups and landholders to ensure the impacts are felt past the end of the project. Planning is currently underway to execute this over the next three years for most effective outcomes. Scott Hutchens has been appointed at the project officer to deliver this project.

- The MRLB was also successful in a project with Mid Murray Landcare for \$95,000 through Healthy Rivers funding. Seasonal control of water weeds was completed in the lower catchment resulting in weed blooms with the ideal conditions. Surveys uncovered large new infestations of sagittarian in the Young Husband area and new infestations of yellow water lily in several locations. Yellow water lily was controlled at known sites including Curnamont, Long Flat, Sturt Reserve shack site and Riverglades wetlands and backwaters. Access to some sites required either a kayak or wading in. The MRLB completed drone flights of the back water at Curnamont and will follow up with more footage in March. All mainstream infestations have had treatments to stop the spread this year.



*Photo 9. Conway Johnson wading in to spray new infestation of yellow water lily.*

- A trial of the new chemical Clipper has resulted in better than expected results. There is still work to do for foliar application and residual effect but early signs are very good. In an inspection undertaken from Swan Reach to Greenways Landing, a large amount of noogoora burr was found after the high water flows in February. This infestation was controlled by being sprayed from the boat at the time of the inspection.



*Photo 10. Before and after treatment with the new chemical, Clipper*

- For many years the wetlands team has been advocating to the redevelopment of flow management infrastructure along Bookmark Creek to improve flow management capacity and fish passage. A project to reinstate a high-value fast flowing habitat over the 8km length of the Bookmark Creek anabranch is now underway, funded under the Sustaining Riverland Environments (SRE) Program managed by the Department for Environment and Water. The project works will replace existing infrastructure to increase flow in the creek to create fast flowing habitat for large bodied native fish, construct fish-friendly infrastructure to facilitate their movement between the creek, the River



Murray and Lock 4 and Lock 5 weir pool, and enable improved watering of adjacent wetlands and floodplains. The first draft of detailed design drawings and technical specifications are currently out for review by agency experts. The construction project is anticipated to commence early in the new financial year.



Photo 11. Student volunteers Ethan and Mia assist wetlands team ecologist, Tiffany Nay to capture and microchip European carp to study the effectiveness of fish screen in receding carp impacts in wetlands (above). Weighing and measuring carp before micro-chipping them and releasing to monitor their movements and the effectiveness of fish screens (right).

- Infrastructure development options and concept design work is also underway for other priority wetlands in the Riverland that are managed by the wetlands team in collaboration with the landholders and other community stakeholder groups. These include the Beldora – Spectacle Lakes Wetland Complex, Overland Corner wetlands, the Loveday Mussels Lagoon wetland complex, and Putjeda Creek. Subject to the finalisation of design concepts and the consequent cost implications these site are also on the current priority list for progression under the Sustaining Riverland Environments program.
- Between late 2018 and early 2019 several thousand Murray hardyhead (*Craterocephalus fluviatilis*), a nationally endangered small bodied native fish, were translocated from managed populations in the Riverland region to Little Frenchmans Creek in south western NSW. Prior to this, the Murray hardyhead had been regarded as extinct in New South Wales for more than a decade. A recent monitoring survey at Little Frenchmans Creek caught in excess of 200,000 Murray hardyhead, in a single night - a completely unprecedented catch in a routine population survey of this kind. This is a phenomenal result - reflecting the value of collaboration between agencies and individuals, across borders.



Photo 12. 200,000 Murray hardyhead caught at Little Frenchmans Creek

- Members of the wetlands team worked with our partners at Aquasave - Nature Glenelg Trust, Urrbrae Agricultural High School and Alberton Primary School to translocate 210 Endangered Southern purple-spotted gudgeon (*Mogurnda adspersa*) into the Greenlands wetland near Murray Bridge. These endangered small-bodied wetland native fish were bred and raised in captive breeding programs run at both of the schools with the support of fish ecologists from Aquasave - Nature Glenelg Trust. Greenlands is being managed as a Southern purple-spotted gudgeon population surrogate site to improve the success of translocations of this species into wild sites along the River Murray.



Photo 13. Urrbrae conservation aquaculture students transferring Southern purple-spotted gudgeon into Greenlands wetland.



Photo 14. A beautiful, big, healthy Southern purple-spotted gudgeon from the Urrbrae Agricultural High School captive breeding program.

### Progress on program strategies

Program Strategies	Focus Areas*	Status
Survey and control aquatic and terrestrial weeds impacting the river corridor environment.	5	☺
Identify and map priority boneseed sites along river corridor.	5	☺
Survey, control and monitor Murray River and associated creeks and wetlands.	5	☒
Plan, negotiate, implement and monitor the delivery of Commonwealth Environmental Water Office (CEWO) environmental water to targeted floodplain wetlands along the River Murray.	1	☑
Plan, coordinate, guide and monitor the hydrological profiles of managed pool-connected wetlands along the River Murray.	2	☑
Engage the community and stakeholders in wetland planning, management, monitoring and learning opportunities around wetland environments, wetland management and on the nature, value and use of environmental water.	4	☑
Plan, implement and support key wetland threatened species initiatives with the involvement of community and stakeholders.	3	☑

\*Refer to Appendix 1

Legend ☑ = On Track, ○ = Not Started, ☒ = Behind Schedule, ☺ = Completed





# Healthy natural landscapes

## Program investment

Program	Levies	External	Total
Landscape Scale Restoration	370,929	700,000	1,070,929
Restoring Iron grass Grasslands	-	625,531	625,531
Threatened Mallee Birds	-	315,055	315,055
Pest plant and animal management	222,660	-	222,660
Program Support	276,342	54,847	331,189
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>869,931</b>	<b>1,695,433</b>	<b>2,565,364</b>

*Program investment as per the 2021-22 Murraylands and Riverland Business plan.*

## Progress Summary

Despite contractor and machinery challenges another six dams have been decommissioned in Danggali Conservation Park this quarter and work is continuing. This work extends the restoration of habitat for woodland birds in the pastoral country through the removal of water points for feral animals. The success with this threatened bird work may have contributed to winning a Commonwealth Threatened Species Strategy Action Plan Grant for our cross state multi-partner project Protecting the black-eared miner from extinction due to hybridisation.

Collaboration and engagement has continued well through our ongoing involvement on the Kangaroo Partnership project, with a presentation of community perspectives of kangaroo management hosted by our region attracting more than 100 viewers. In relation to another topic, the response to the community engagement success of the 2021 Find Our Fungi project saw staff complete fungi descriptions for an new addendum to the work previously done, to maintain interest and grow the citizen science community.

The Irongrass Native Temperate Grassland (INGT) team's field days to showcase the project's grazing and seeding trials were well attended, attracting a diverse audience including graziers, conservation volunteers and Landscape Staff and NGOs, demonstrating that interest in the project continues to grow. A goat cull on grassland properties and weed control at grassland sites are being planned.

Pest plant and animal works is critical in contributing to the MRLB Healthy Natural Landscapes priority. Vertebrate pest control counts are indicating a reduction in numbers, demonstrating success with earlier programs. Weed control continues, but success is again evident with revisits of know sites demonstrating nearly 70% of locations now deemed inactive in some cases.

## Quarterly Program highlights

- **First field days for our native grassland trials.**

After three years of seed collection, making connections with land holders and designing our grassland trials, MRLB has finally taken our community out there to have a look at three of our trials. This has been a combined effort from our two project staff (grassland ecologist and restoration ecologist), Aimee Linke from Mid Murray Landcare, Andrew Fairney from Seeding Natives, Glen Christie from Succession Ecology and well known grassland consultant Anne Brown.

MRLB has had a great turn out with lots of interest in the trials and project. Discussions focussed on the area where conservation and sheep production values overlap. Our grassland ecologist took farmers and land managers out through the grassland pasture and discussed the importance of plant diversity, root diversity and soil health - all of which are integral for a more productive and drought resilient system. There was great feedback from the day and it was refreshing to have keen interest in our conservation messaging from the local sheep producers.



*Photo 15. Discussions with landholders at the Terowie Field Day on 30 March 2022*



*Photo 16. Nicola Barnes (grassland ecologist) talking about the values of native grasslands at our Truro Field Day on 31 March 2022.*

- **RMMAC Engagement on the Living Landscapes Project.**

A meeting was held with the RMMAC Indigenous Ranger team, to provide an overview of the Living Landscapes project, context around what MRLB is doing in aiming to restore this landscape, processes around protecting cultural heritage and how the funds are currently supporting the active involvement of the ranger team this year. Several opportunities were offered to the rangers, including involvement in the wider work of the MRLB's ecology team. Areas of special interest to members of the ranger team were also discussed, as a first step in connecting them with staff working in those areas of the MRLB business for two-way exchange of knowledge and information.

- **Dam decommissioning in process.**

At sites within Danggali Conservation Park work continues to decommission dams to reduce the availability of permanent water. Works may involve flattening or filling in depressions at some sites, where at other very large and deep dam sites, this is cost-prohibitive. Other options entail filling in the smaller silt traps at the head of the dam while also breaking down the extensive drain networks that feed the dams. These works re-direct and restore flow to parts of the landscape that would have naturally received it. Initial actions to decommission six dams were undertaken in the last quarter.

- **Mallee emu-wren habitat assessment**

Since the initial phase of the translocation project of the Mallee emu wren in 2018/19 to Ngarkat Conservation Park, the sites have been assessed for their suitability for a potential phase two translocation effort. A number of sites with a viable fire history were surveyed to ascertain a species composition and structure that would be suitable for mallee emu wren. Many sites appeared to be suitable or are progressing towards becoming suitable in the coming years to support the species. With threatened Mallee bird surveys being rolled out this season in the southern most mallee parks (including Ngarkat), the MRLB hopes to learn more about the status of the Mallee emu wren across all these locations in readiness for a second phase of this project.





*Photo 17. Dam decommissioning in process*

- **Recreating Regent Parrot habitat.**

Landholder agreements are being completed between Trees for Life and two landholders (also almond growers) in Murtho. This is a collaborative project between the MRLB, Trees for Life and dedicated landholders with the aim of establishing an important Regent Parrot corridor to improve connectivity for the species. Seed has already been collected and the MRLB anticipates to be able to do 60 km of direct seeding this winter.

- A focused goat trapping program at Black Hill sleeper track has removed 35 goats from the landscape with the team worked with local landholders to install and monitor the trap. Surveillance picked up a larger mob of goats but they did not return and will be a focus for next season. The trap has been relocated to a new area to monitor goat movements and a trap camera has been purchased to monitor the goat trap remotely. This will save staff time as they won't have to travel out to yards to check camera cards. The district team has also contributed to the aerial shoot at Billiat Conservation Park.

- Cost recovery works have been taking up a great deal of time for both district teams. Contracts with the Department for Infrastructure and Transport (DIT), DIT rail, DIT roads and One Rail Australia are almost complete, with rabbit baiting in its final weeks. Rabbit baiting programs have been completed for several hundred kilometres along DIT and One Rail corridors to reduce the impacts of rabbits both within the corridor and on adjoining properties. All programs requiring 4 bait runs of free feeds and the baited run. The MRLB requested additional funding of \$20,000 and received from DIT for state and federal highway of \$20k.



*Photo 18. Rabbit baiting on DIT rail corridor as part of Cost Recovery program*

- Cost recovery works for DIT, with priority sites at Waikerie and Blanchetown for rabbit control, and pest plant control focussing on summer grasses has occurred along the Sturt and Goyder Highways, and silverleaf nightshade on the Browns Well Highway and Morgan Road. These works have been complemented by other district programs engaging adjacent landholders and works on arterial roads in line with our landscape approach to pest plants and animals.

## Progress on program strategies

Program strategies	Focus Areas*	Status
Continue to decommission former pastoral dams across the South Olary Plain project area.	5	☑
Set up trials to investigate different restoration techniques to restore function to the South Olary Plain.	3	☑
Collect and store native seed for use in restoration actions.	4	☑
Facilitate working group to deliver coordinated monitoring effort and direct herbivore control to reduce total grazing pressure to the South Olary Plain.	1	☑
Undertake priority actions to address the conservation of threatened flora, namely targeted threat abatement activities to maintain momentum on the conservation of a few key flora species.	5	☑
Choose and protect a key biodiversity hotspot (e.g. Jutland precinct, Prospect Hill or the Monarto complex) through implementation of restoration activities to ensure the gains from previous investment in restoration are retained and capitalised upon.	3	☑
Create and maintain seed production areas.	4	☑
Use seed from wild harvest and seed production areas to seed into degraded areas and improve plant species diversity.	3	☑
Set up trials to investigate the impacts of pulse grazing and resting periods.	1	☑
Improve the understanding of the role of fire in threatened bird and plant conservation across the Living Landscapes project area and Billiatt Conservation Park.	2	☑
Contribute to fire planning to ensure the best ecological outcomes from the prescribed burn program and CFS fire planning.	5	☑
Undertake strategic herbivore control in conjunction with the wetland team and district officers.	1	☑
Undertake monitoring of malleefowl and black-eared miners, and other species as identified.	5	☑
Support ongoing pest animal management activities in emerging areas.	1	☑
Monitor invasion pathways and control pest plant and alert species.	6	☑
Identify and map priority boneseed sites across key areas of the Murraylands District.	6	😊
Manage of priority African Boxthorn infestations through landholder engagement and education, roadside and property notices, community education and media campaigns.	6	😊
Undertake works to destroy infestations of bridal veil and hudson pear across the Murraylands district.	6	☑
Recover costs for works delivered for external agencies.	6	☑
Assist landholders to control priority pest animals including rabbits and goats.	6	☑
Assist landholders to control priority pest weeds.	6	☑

\*Refer to Appendix 1

Legend ☑ = On Track, ○ = Not Started, ☒ = Behind Schedule, 😊 = Completed



## People at the heart of landscape management

### Program investment

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Program	Levies	External	Total
Grassroots Grants	333,289	-	333,289
Education Program	297,429	-	297,429
Aboriginal Partnership Program	348,291	319,769	668,060
Capacity Building and volunteer support	169,971	-	169,971
Citizen Science	128,625	-	128,625
Program Support	592,953	-	592,953
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,870,558</b>	<b>319,769</b>	<b>2,190,327</b>

*Program investment as per the 2021-22 Murraylands and Riverland Business plan.*

### Program Progress summary

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Working with young people to build their understanding of landscape management, get them involved in practical action, and increase their leadership abilities is a key focus area for the MRLB. For term one of school the theme has been 'Sustainable Water Use' and the MRLB's education events included a range of issues such as the region's water resources, irrigation efficiency, plant growth, new technologies in water management, and how water is managed and shared. A range of sustainable water-related teacher and student resources were also created and updated, and have been made available on the education program's improved, new-look webpage.

During this quarter the Citizens science team also ran Insect Investigator school sessions across the state. Unfortunately due to COVID these had to be run virtually, but still appeared to engage the students. They started collecting their insect samples at the beginning of March, these samples will now undergo sorting and DNA barcoding before going back to the schools with the results later in the year.

The call for Round 3 (2022-23) Grassroots Grants projects was made in this quarter. A total of 43 applications were received to a total value of \$600,850 (excluding GST). The next stage of the process is the strategic and technical assessment of all projects by staff and board members to determine the successful projects.

Continuing to partner with First Nations to manage the region's landscapes has occurred through regular formal meetings with First Nations groups across the region. This quarter meetings and workshops have been held with the River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (RMMAC), the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation, the Mannum Aboriginal Community Association Inc, and Ngopamuldi Aboriginal Corporation to ensure the early and on-going engagement of First Nations

A key role of the First Nations Partnerships program is supporting the range of MRLB programs and projects, as well as other partner organisations, to engage with the region's First Nations. This quarter the team has provided supported a range of teams and projects including the Ecology team (RPL Threatened Birds and Iron Grass Projects, LPF Living Landscapes Project), Wetlands and Floodplains team (AWAs and Yarlularu Ruwe Assessments), Water Planning team (groundwater training and AWAs), Sustainable Agriculture team (RPL project engagement), District teams (First Nations input into project development), MERI team (development of evaluation rubrics for First Nations engagement), Education

team (First Nations Welcomes to Country, speakers at events, and input into educational resources), Communication team (First Nations related media and communications content), and a range of Department for Environment and Water programs and projects (e.g. Water Infrastructure and Operations, the Living Murray, and National Parks and Wildlife).

## Quarterly Program highlights

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- The term 1 Murraylands Young Environmental Leaders (YEL) Forum focused on sustainable water use. It was an action packed day where 28 students from 7 schools across the Murraylands enjoyed a field trip to a buffalo farm, learnt about the new technology in smart dairies, found out how to make ice cream, did some experiments on crossing plants to produce low water-use varieties, milled their own wheat, planted a seed and did some problem solving by creating their own sprinkler and irrigation systems.
- Education Officers Julie and Ilyth ran an excursion to the Riverglades Wetlands for 17 Year 11/12 outdoor education students from Tyndale Christian School in Murray Bridge. The day included a Welcome to Country by Ngarrindjeri Elder Darryl Koolmatric, discussion about the importance of River Murray wetlands, and a hands on water testing session to check water quality in the wetlands.



*Photo 19. Murraylands Young Environmental Leaders (YEL) Forum. Photo 20. Excursion to the Riverglades Wetlands.*

- Education Officer Cindy delivered a session on frogs of the Riverland and frog life-cycles to 25 students at the Loxton Lutheran School in term 1. Due to the COVID situation in our local schools this session was delivered on-line into the classroom. COVID has created a huge challenge to working with schools this quarter but despite this, the program has been able to continue to offer a range of great activities to schools across the region.
- The River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (RMMAC) ranger team started in mid-March. This is a major milestone in the partnership between RMMAC and the MRLB and represents a significant outcome for the First Peoples community and the management of cultural and environmental assets across the Riverland and Mallee. The team has been busy with a range of training, meeting with various project teams, and undertaking assessments and planning for site protection and restoration projects. The project is funded by the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) and the Landscape Priority Fund.





*Photo 24. The River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (RMMAC) ranger team started in March 2022.*

- The Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation is working with the MRLB to provide Ngarrindjeri names for the meeting rooms at the new Murray Bridge office. The names relate to local species of plants and animals which are culturally significant to Ngarrindjeri and also represent key shared values between Ngarrindjeri and the MRLB such as sustainability, wise use, healing and communication. Giving Ngarrindjeri names to the meeting rooms is a small way the MRLB can acknowledge and show respect for the traditional owners of the lower Murray area and help to showcase and promote Ngarrindjeri culture to all that visit the office.
- A small group of students from St. Francis of Assisi school in Renmark got involved with fish monitoring at Bookmark Creek with the Bookmark Creek Action Group, the MRLB's wetland team, and Education Officer Ilyth. Linking students with local groups and getting them involved in local projects is a key part of the Education program.



*Photo 21. Education Officer Cindy delivered a session on frogs of the Riverland.*



*Photo 22. St. Francis of Assisi school in Renmark involved in fish monitoring at Bookmark Creek.*

- Thirty students from Moorook Primary School and Cobdogla Primary School got involved in Sustainable water use - Healthy Plants Healthy People sessions with Belinda Cay from AgCommunicators. These fun and informative sessions included activities on plant growth, plant adaptation and water use.



*Photo 23. Primary school students in the RI participating at the Healthy Plants Healthy People sessions with Belinda Cay from AgCommunicator.*

- Turtles are a culturally significant species to the First Nations of the Murraylands and Riverland. They are also a key part of the River Murray ecosystem, particularly the role they play in protecting water quality by consuming dead fish and animals in the River. The MRLB is currently leading a large partnership between the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation, the Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board, the Living Murray Program and LaTrobe University to engage the Ngarrindjeri community in turtle conservation. One of the exciting activities being planned is a series of 6 Yarning Circles to capture and record Ngarrindjeri knowledge and history relating to River Murray turtles. These sessions will be held at various locations across the Lower Murray and Lower Lakes area. The project will also involve the Ngarrindjeri community in turtle-related citizen science projects and work with local schools to educate children about turtles and their cultural importance.



*Photo 25. The board is partnering with the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation to conserve River Murray turtles.*





- Our relationships with local councils continue to grow and strengthen. In the last several months staff have been guiding District Council of Loxton Waikerie on locations and appropriate rabbit control works, which compliments that being undertaken in the peri urban areas. The Renmark Paringa Council have also worked collaboratively with district staff to ensure new khaki weed locations are reported in a timely manner and control is coordinated between us.
- A key achievement of this quarter was the significant improvements made to the online application form (to make the process simpler and faster for applicants), and the successful release and promotion of the Round 3 Grassroots Grants program.



Photo26. Applications for Round 3 of the Grassroots Grants program were open in Quarter 3.

- Insect Investigators school workshops across South Australia - unfortunately due to COVID restrictions not allowing visitors into schools these were all run online. 19 sessions were run with 17 schools, involving 20 teachers and 285 students from reception to year 8. However, effective engagement with the students and teachers was still achieved. For some schools this was the first time they had had a virtual visitor to the classroom. Loxton North Primary School session was a highlight, with some very interested students. The schools have also been sharing their insect discoveries with each other on the website. <https://insectinvestigators.com.au/discussionboard/>



Photo 27. Insect Investigators school workshops across South Australia.

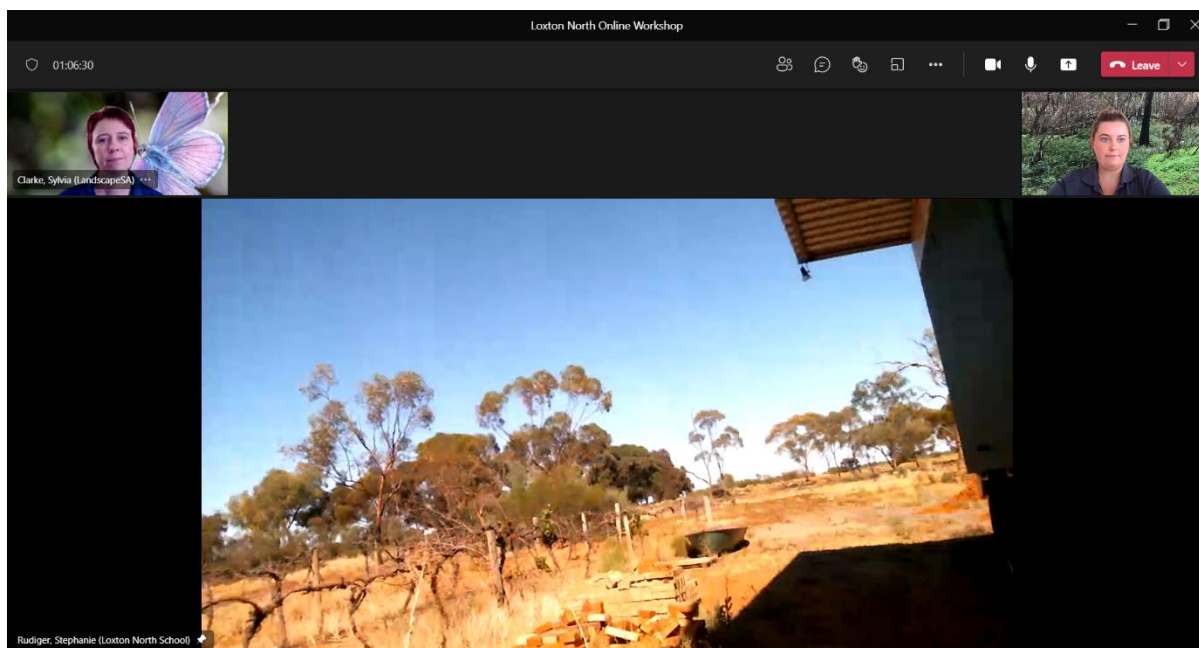


Photo 28. Loxton North Primary School taking us for a virtual tour of their trap set up site.

## Progress on program strategies

Program strategies	Focus Area*	Status
Establish and maintain regular engagement mechanisms with First Nations groups.	2	✓
Support landscape board programs, projects and staff with First Nations engagement including heritage risk management, ILUA processes, project delivery, cultural values assessment and monitoring, planning and meeting mandatory employment/procurement targets.	2	✓
Facilitate and support First Nations' participation in landscape management including employment and capacity building programs.	2	✓
Support cultural awareness and competency development of the board, its staff, and partners.	2	✓
Build and maintain strategic partnerships with, and between, stakeholders to support First Nations engagement.	1	✓
Deliver an effective, efficient and community-friendly Grassroots Grants funding program.	5	✓
Support Grassroots Grants projects that build community knowledge, skills and participation in landscape management.	4	✓
Manage the Grassroots Grants program.	5	✓
Provide advice and support to landholders regarding best practice pest plant and animal control.	4	✓
Support community-led pest plant and animal management actions and projects across all five landscape board priorities.	5	✓
Support landholders and provide best practice advice to manage pest plants and animals across the landscape, including one-on-one advice.	4	✓
Build the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board citizen science network through partnerships and community engagement and training.	1	✓
Deliver the Waterwatch program, support volunteer water quality data contributions and run Marne and Saunders Waterbug Bioblitz.	4	✓



<b>Program strategies</b>	<b>Focus Area*</b>	<b>Status</b>
Utilise citizen science platforms like FrogWatch SA and FungiMap to support other team and provide data and engagement for the region.	4	☑
Coordinate the 1 Million Turtles Community Conservation Program in SA.	4	☑
Recognise volunteer contributions to citizen science projects through showcase events and awards.	6	☑
Ensure volunteers have access to the infrastructure needed to contribute to citizen science projects.	6	☑
Support internal teams to integrate citizen science components into their projects.	4	☑
Work with schools to educate and involve young people and teachers in landscape management and leadership.	3	☑
Facilitate the River Murray Youth Council program.	3	☑
Engage young people into landscape management projects and activities (incl. work experience).	3	☑
Provide funding for field days and forums such as the Mallee Sustainable Farming event and the Mallee and Coorong Advisory Committee AgForum.	4	☑
Implement AgKnowledge grants processes, including development, approvals, assessments, management and reporting.	5	☑
Monitor CCW Improving Riverland Soils sites, grower engagement and extension of results.	4	☑
Extension of relevant project work and information and promotion of events and information.	4	☑
Coordinate the South Olary Plain project steering group and engage with relevant stakeholders and partners.	1	☑
Develop a citizen science project to increase knowledge of the regional distribution of fungi.	4	☑
Undertake monitoring of vegetation trial sites, interpret results and extend information to the community, including graziers.	4	☑
Support regional and national recovery teams for threatened mallee birds.	1	☑

*\*Refer to Appendix 1.*

Legend ☑ = On Track, ○ = Not Started, ☒ = Behind Schedule, 😊 = Completed



## Foundational programs

### Program investment

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Program	Levies	External	Total
Board leadership and governance	197,611		197,611
Planning and Evaluation	599,167	26,000	625,167
Customer and Business Services	114,359		114,359
Council levy collection fees	33,899		33,899
Communications	491,843		491,843
Program Support	667,119	233,597	900,717
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,103,998</b>	<b>259,597</b>	<b>2,363,595</b>

*Program investment as per the 2021-22 Murraylands and Riverland Business plan.*

### Progress summary

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The finance and the investment & information teams commenced work on the draft 2022/23 operational plan budget. As part of this process teams submitted bids to utilise additional capacity for projects and resourcing. This will be funded by savings and projected underspends in the 2021/22 year, uncommitted budget from 2022/23 and retained earnings held from prior years.

In human resources, significant work was undertaken including 12 vacancies advertised and 9 filled, performance reviews commencing and the new G=government My Safety injury management system being introduced to staff.

The first position statement 'Climate Ready' was approved by the Board. Others will be developed as resources permit and according to need.

The rubric for the cross cutting pest management theme has been completed with a definitions document and a data management plan. Work has commenced on developing a rubric for the sustainable water use priority, a definition document and the rubric has been completed, and a draft of the data management plan has been developed.






















### Quarterly Program highlights

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- The purchase of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool has been made to support internal and external customers with recording enquiries.
- Further development of IT solutions to assist with day to day administration of some tasks has been undertaken, resulting in time savings.
- Our communications and engagement team provided S=support to the Mallee and Coorong Advisory Committee AgForum, gaining media coverage on ABC online. This team also facilitated the filming and production of presentation videos and distributed online.

- Communications and engagement also supported the promotion of Grassroots Grants opportunities including instigating a new email promotional banner campaign. This year the campaign increased the reach of the grant call which resulted in a few new grant applicants.
- Grassroots Grants round 3 was opened on time with 43 grants applications received and being processed.
- The communications and engagement team also assisted in the implementation of the new community-facing quarterly report to improve transparency to major stakeholder groups.
- Support was also provided to the water planning team to organise Marne Saunders community information sessions and consultation activities on the River Murray WAP amendments.
- The finance team has worked with the investment and information team to draft the 2022-23 operational plan in establishing the plan budget. Through this additional capacity was identified and a process established to consult with teams on how to best utilise these funds.
- 12 position vacancies were advertised and 9 were filled.
- Two new recruits completed the induction program.
- A new performance review cycle started with 35% of reviews completed by the end of March 2022.
- 22 employment contracts were issued.
- The new Gov SAFETY injury management system was introduced to staff.
- The rubric for the cross cutting pest management theme has been completed with a definitions document and a data management plan. Work has commenced to develop a rubric for the sustainable water use priority, a definition document and the rubric has been completed, and a draft of the data management plan has been developed.
- MRLB representation at the Attorney General's department's cross agency working group for the state interconnector project has involved as many discussions outside the working group with key partners, contacts and the proponents as it has the number of working group meetings. A focus has been on ensuring the Threatened Species Management Plan delivers well designed monitoring and evaluation for key areas such as bird strikes of regent parrots at several points on the alignment and for wader species near Chowilla. The MRLB also has a focus on waterway, soil, pest and weed management during construction, supported by establishing a close working relationship with the contractor.
- The Board has approved the first position statement to identify the MRLB's aims to support communities, individuals and ecosystems to become climate ready.
- The Murraylands and Riverland Pest Plant Action Plan has been finalised and presented to the Board for noting. The summary of this document is available on the website, and community and stakeholders are able to access to understand the reasoning behind district works. The full version will be integral to guiding the development of future projects and prioritising resources to improve impacts and outcomes.
- New apps, surveys and improvements for data collection have been developed by the information and investment team to help different teams across the organisation with their field work.
- AgKnowledge final report templates and final workshop presentation templates have been completed and issued to collaborators.

## Progress on program strategies

Program strategies	Focus Area*	Status
Provide a high level of customer service and administration services to both internal and external stakeholders.	7	
Undertake landscape board office relocations.	7	
Undertake landscape board office renovation.	7	
Undertake IT upgrades and procedure review.	7	
Undertake an MS Teams trial for desk-based phone calls (both internal and external).	7	
Provide executive support to the landscape board and its committees.	7	
Ensure the landscape board continues to meet the statutory board requirements through training, maintenance of registers and evaluating performance.	7	
Implement a regional communications strategy to build awareness of the landscape board and its work, and how the landscape levy contributes to the management of the region's landscapes.	5	
Oversee the management of landscape board and funding partner branding to maintain integrity and meet funding guidelines.	3	
Identify and monitor external projects through the finance system.	3	
Provide support to team leaders and executive leadership team for the financial management of their projects.	6	
Identify and monitor levy projects through the finance system.	1	
Manage transactional human resources management including administration, systems and reporting to achieve employment accuracy and staff satisfaction.	8	
Manage all aspects of Injury on Duty including Work Cover claims and Return to Work procedures as per legislation and to achieve staff satisfaction.	8	
Apply human resources policies and procedures as per legislation, commissioners' determinations, regulations, wards and enterprise agreements to meet legislative requirements.	8	
Provide appropriate human resources advice to all staff on request and provide strategic human resources advice and guidance to line management when required.	8	
Administrate levies collected by councils.	3	
Transition information management from DEW to Board ownership, maintaining legislative requirements and easy access for staff, whilst also improving information management in line with best practice.	4	
Implement geographic information systems (GIS) and support staff to collect and share location-based information and stories.	4	
Undertake annual business and operational planning.	1	
Provide grant management support for Grassroots and Ag Knowledge Grant programs, and provide administrative support for the Ag Excellence Alliance Mixed Cover Cropping partnership project.	3	
Launch and implement the landscape plan to guide business decisions.	1	









<b>Program strategies</b>	<b>Focus Area*</b>	<b>Status</b>
Facilitate the ongoing review and implementation of the business plan.	1	
Develop the Landscape Evaluation Framework to evaluate the delivery of the landscape plan and supporting business plan.	2	
Ensure the objectives of landscape board's policy and the regional landscape plan are promoted in responses to State Government policy and other referral matters.	3	
Enable the landscape board to deliver state and national reporting requirements.	3	
Build the monitoring, report and evaluation skills and knowledge of staff by providing technical advice, development of systems and coordination of evaluation activities.	2	
Manage and implement the Water Efficiency Program.	3	
Undertake bird surveys as part of the ongoing Landscape Assessment Framework.	4	
Deliver the Insect Investigators project for the South Australian Museum.	3	

*\*Refer to Appendix 1.*

Legend  = On Track,  = Not Started,  = Behind Schedule,  = Completed

### 3. Standard metrics reporting

The standard metrics are a defined and agreed short-list of measures the organisation counts for the purposes of communicating to the public and accountability to the executive leadership team and board members. These standard metrics quantify what has been delivered during the current quarter.

	Measure	Frequency							Q3 Actual
Events	#	Quarterly							66
Groups financially supported	#								36
Individuals engaged at events	#								1396
Participants at recognition volunteer events <sup>1</sup>	#								0
Partnerships	#								69
Schools supported	#								93
Schools actively involved in the education program									23
One-on-one technical advice interactions	#								389
On-ground trials / demonstrations established or maintained	#								16
Area benefitted from pest animal control	Ha								477535
Area benefitted from pest weed control	Ha								1350.1
Land managers involved in coordinated baiting	Ha								82
Area surveyed	Ha								509.5
Compliance issues investigated	#								2
Communication materials published	#								1659
Radio/TV/newspaper interviews conducted	#								18
Followers on social media	#								5419
WAA permits received and processed	#								6
Development referrals responded to by landscape board staff	#								19
Area of wetlands and surrounding floodplain water regimes managed	Ha		Annual						
Area treated by fire management action	Ha								-
Priority threatened species and/or ecological communities supported	#								-
Volume of water returned to the environment	ML								-
Area covered by species recovery actions	Ha								-
Area of revegetation	Ha								-
Area covered by practice change	Ha								-
Treatments implemented to improve water management	#								-
External funds to levy funds	Ratio								-

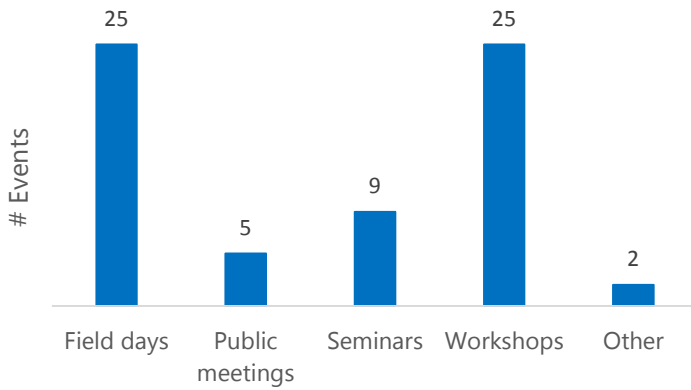
Note: The shaded boxes above represent which priorities make up the total number of the quarter for each standard metric.

<sup>1</sup> The volunteer recognition events will be held on quarter 4.

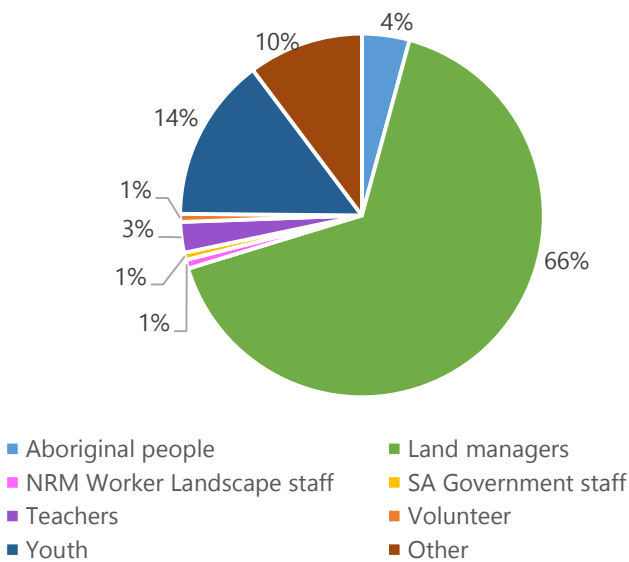
# 4. Stakeholder engagement

The landscape board seeks to engage with the community and diverse stakeholders through different activities, projects and media in order to work together towards long-term regional landscape outcomes. This section provides a summary of the stakeholder engagement during the current quarter.

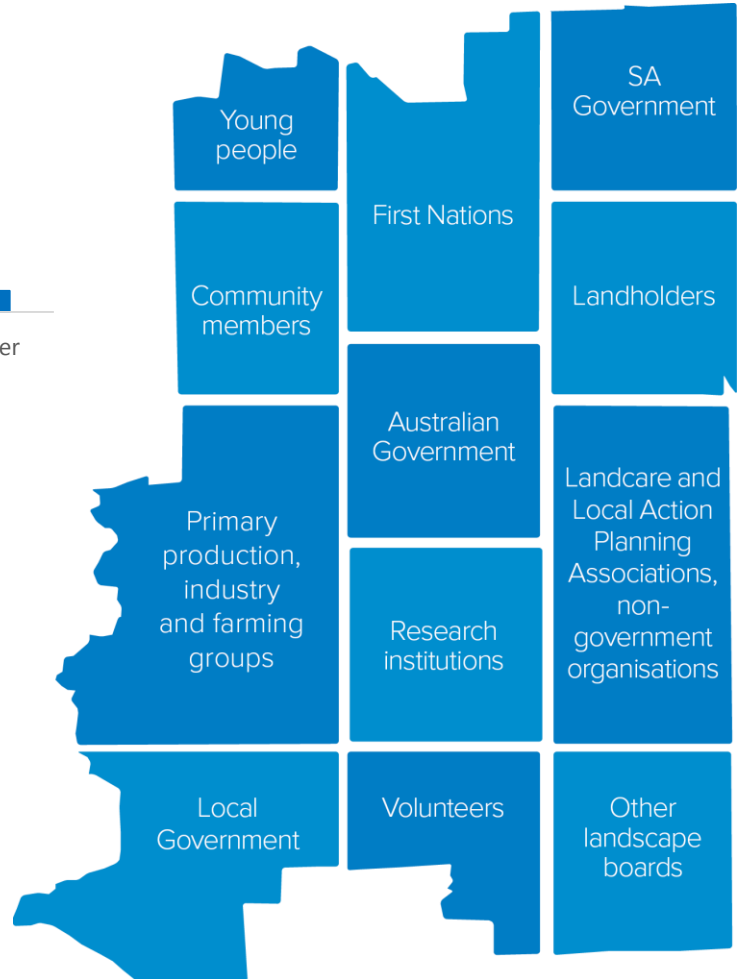
## Type of events conducted



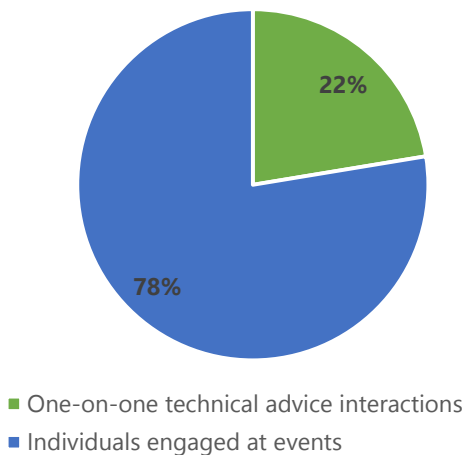
## Types of individuals engaged at events



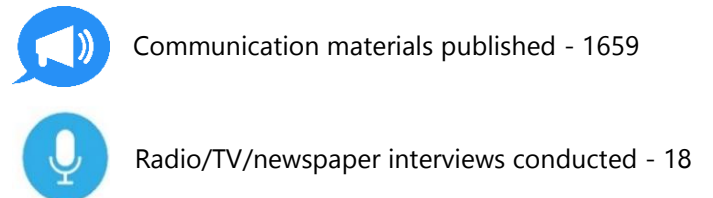
## Key Partnerships



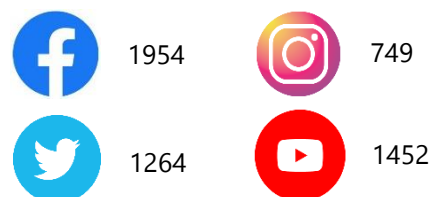
## Spilt on how individuals are engaged



## Traditional media produced



## Followers on social media



# Appendix 1. Focus Areas for Priorities



## Sustainable agricultural and pastoral landscapes

1. Work with industry and farming groups to identify and address soil management issues to improve soil health and build resilience.
2. Encourage integrated management of prioritised pest plants and animals and early detection of alert species for improved biosecurity.
3. Promote and support the protection and enhancement of on-farm biodiversity and native vegetation as part of a productive system.
4. Promote and demonstrate best management practices to retain ground-cover and reduce erosion risk.
5. Support land managers to build resilience in farming systems through monitoring and managing climate risks and extreme events.



## Sustainable water use

1. Work with the irrigation industry to optimise water use for productive, environmental and cultural outcomes.
2. Ensure sustainable water use by all water users in a changing climate.
3. Improve water literacy to develop the community's understanding of water management for productive, environmental and cultural outcomes.
4. Support water users to build resilience through monitoring and managing climate risks and extreme events.
5. Encourage integrated management of prioritised pest plants and animals and early detection of alert species for improved biosecurity.



## Healthy rivers, lakes and wetlands

1. Manage and deliver environmental water to build the resilience of targeted wetland and floodplain ecosystems.
2. Actively manage watercourses for improved ecological outcomes in a changing climate.
3. Deliver initiatives that improve conditions for threatened species and culturally significant species.
4. Improve water literacy to develop the community's understanding of water management for productive, environmental and cultural outcomes.
5. Encourage integrated management of prioritised pest plants and animals and early detection of alert species.





## Healthy landscapes

1. Work in partnership to manage total grazing pressure, including from over-abundant native species.
2. Work in partnership to proactively manage fire in the landscape to improve or maintain condition of key ecological and cultural assets.
3. Encourage targeted revegetation and restoration.
4. Ensure future seed availability of native species for revegetation in a changing climate.
5. Improve the level of protection for threatened and culturally significant species and ecological communities.
6. Encourage integrated management of prioritised pest plants and animals and early detection of alert species.



## People at the heart of landscape management

1. Build and maintain strategic partnerships with, and between, stakeholders for mutually beneficial outcomes.
2. Work in partnership with First Nations to manage the region's landscapes, protect and restore cultural values and assets, and build capacity.
3. Partner with young people, foster their understanding, participation and leadership.
4. Strengthen capacity through increased knowledge, skills and participation.
5. Support community-led landscape management, providing resources to support community projects and practical action.
6. Recognise and encourage volunteers and volunteer community groups and support them to work safely and effectively.



## Foundational programs

1. Develop the regional landscape plan and associated business plans.
2. Implement an effective monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework.
3. Ensure contractual obligations that come with external funding are delivered.
4. Continuously improve the information management systems that support evidence-based decision making.
5. Regular communication of landscape board business.
6. Accurate and timely financial, accounting and budgetary support services which are compliant with Australian Accounting Standards and government financial policies and procedures.
7. Effective and efficient administrative services providing support to staff, the landscape board, and its committees.
8. Maintain staff satisfaction through the management and delivery of human resources policy and programs

## More information

[landscape.sa.gov.au/mr](http://landscape.sa.gov.au/mr)

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