



March 2008 Edition

## National NRM program announced by the Australian Government

The new Federal government has just announced its package to deal with Natural Resource Management. In a joint media release in mid March the Hon Peter Garrett MP (Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Arts) and the Hon Tony Burke MP (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) announced the following:



## **Caring for our Country: a better outcome for Australia's environment and natural resources**

The Federal Government will invest \$2.25 billion over five years on a new program to restore the health of Australia's environment and build on improved land management practices. It represents a new, coordinated approach to environmental management in Australia built on transparent and consistent national targets. It aims to protect Australia's unique natural environment and to improve the sustainable management of our natural resources. Consequently, it is refocusing its natural resource management programs in the new Caring for Our Country initiative to better target national priorities. The program will complement the \$130 million *Australia's Farming Future* initiative (info taken from the media release).

A website has been set up for the purpose of providing information and answers to some of the main questions and issues that may arise. To see the webpage follow the links below, it is important reading and covers how landcare will be funded over the next 5 years. For example, Envirofunds will no longer exist. For more information see the website:

<http://www.nrm.gov.au/funding/future.html>

Information sourced from [www.nrm.gov.au](http://www.nrm.gov.au)

For the online recipients, you can follow these links [Priorities](#), [Funding](#), [Delivery](#), [Transition](#),

### The Wheatbelt Drainage Council Advisory Committee

The Wheatbelt Drainage Council (WDC) was formed at the request of the Minister for Water Resources, John Kobelke, to provide strategic, planning, governance and implementation advice on drainage as part of water-cycle management. The WDC are currently working to develop a policy framework for inland drainage. Workshops have been held in Perth and 8 wheatbelt centres for the WDC to obtain input into their Draft Policy Framework. One of these workshops took place in Perenjori on the 19th February. The Chair of the WDC is Hendy Cowan, former Deputy Premier. Mr. Cowan along with the WDC are very interested in the Regional Drainage project taking place in the Yarra Yarra Catchment. In particular the governance and "whole of catchment" approach taken in the YY catchment has raised a lot of interest and is seen as a potential test case for other Wheatbelt catchments. Mr. Cowan recently spent two days in the area meeting with Max Hudson (Project Manager) Peter Syme (Chair of the YYCMG) and Robert Nixon (Chair of the YY catchment Regional Council) before being given a tour of the catchment and the works in progress.

If you require any further information on the WDC please email [wdc@water.wa.gov.au](mailto:wdc@water.wa.gov.au) or contact the Executive Officer, Tim Sparks on 08 6364 7800.



## Oil Mallees of the Northern Ag Region - Grand Tour



*MLC Paul Llewellyn, Minister Kim Chance & MLC Bruce Donaldson enjoying a trip on the school bus!*

On March 8<sup>th</sup>, Minister Kim Chance, MLC Paul Llewellyn and MLC Bruce Donaldson toured to inspect oil mallee activities occurring in the region.

They commenced their tour in Mullewa, inspecting Mike Kerkmans' vast alley planting project, the regrowth from his mulched trees and observed the successful survival rates Mike has been able to achieve by watering in seedlings planted during the drought.

They then flew to Kalannie, jumped on the school bus, and took a tour out to Goodlands to see the mallee harvester and still in action. They were all impressed to see the commitment made by local farmers into the industry successfully harvesting and producing oil from the oil mallees. They also appreciated the limitations to our process, namely cost of diesel used to fire the boiler.

We then travelled to a 14 year old planting of plenissima, to see the amount of growth that is expected over that time frame. The necessity for a large scale harvester which can handle large amounts of biomass at a high rate was appreciated by all.

After a quick tour around Kalannie townsite, the visitors enjoyed a coffee at the nursery, they were very impressed as to the number of seedlings it has produced over time and the opportunity for employment the industry offers within the community.



*Minister Kim Chance inspecting the Oil Mallee Harvester*



*Taking time out at the Kalannie nursery*

As Australia begins to understand the importance of its role in the carbon trading system and global warming, it was a timely visit by the Minister and local politicians to see first hand the work already done by farmers in our region and the scope for increasing this role in the future.



### Join Our Mailing List!



We won't bombard you with emails but we will send you relevant information as it becomes available regarding upcoming projects, funding grants and incentives, resources available through our office, useful websites etc...

Please feel free to contact us if there is other information regarding Natural Resource Management that you would like us to provide.

To join our mailing list please email Lizzie at [yycmg\\_lizzie@westnet.com.au](mailto:yycmg_lizzie@westnet.com.au) or call 9973 1425 for further information.

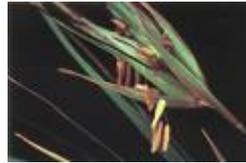
## National Landcare Program Application

The last round of NLP funding has just closed. We had a few options but ended up putting forward a project in conjunction with Dr Suzanne Prober from CSIRO. The project was titled a "Low-risk production systems in marginal farming zones of WA: a role for native grasses?" In summary the project will consider the following:

**Integrating native grasses into conventional agricultural systems could deliver reliable and ecologically-sustainable returns to marginal cropping zones of WA under a drying climate. This project will elucidate conditions and farming practices under which native grasses colonise and persist in these regions, providing baseline information to promote adoption and further development.**



*Austrodanthonia* spp  
Wallaby Grass



*Themeda Trianda*  
Kangaroo Grass

Production systems that can deliver reliable annual returns under a drying climate are needed for the low rainfall (<350 mm annual rainfall) farming zone of WA, estimated to be 3-5 million ha. Whilst the terms of trade for broadacre farming systems are decreasing and the risks associated with high-input farming systems are increasing, the outlook for pasture-oriented livestock production systems is improving (Kingwell and Pannell 2005). Consequently, low-input, robust pasture-based systems are likely to be ecologically and economically more resilient to climate change, and offer a potential low-risk production option in low rainfall areas.

## PURCHASE YOUR EUCALYPTUS OIL NOW!

We currently have Eucalyptus Oil for sale that has been harvested from the Oil Mallees that are growing around the Yarra Yarra region. The possible uses are endless.

If you would like to purchase any oil, we sell it in all sizes up to 5Litres

For information on prices, contact [kalanniedistillers@bigpond.com](mailto:kalanniedistillers@bigpond.com)



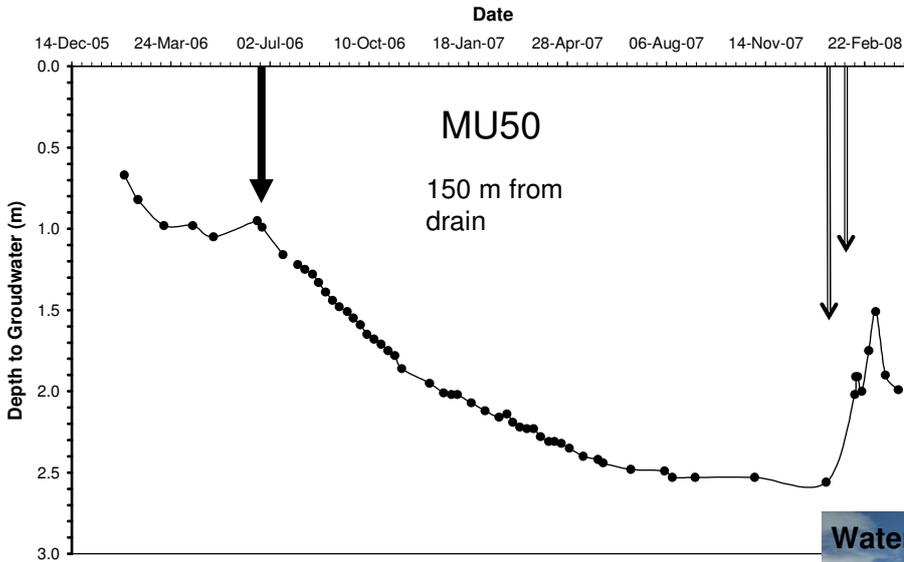
## Deep Drainage Update

The past three months have been busy ones for our deep drainage project. Work is well under way in Jibberding, and construction of the drain should be completed within the next month. This is our first drain to have crossed a major road, requiring specialist equipment to construct the culvert under the Great Northern Highway. (see previous page). We are hoping to start works in Burakin and Mongers 16 shortly, once all permits have been finalised. We are already looking ahead to the next stage of the regional drainage project, which we hope to start implementing from July,

We are very pleased to announce that our program has received national recognition. The Yarra Yarra Project to Demonstrate a Holistic Approach to Catchment Rehabilitation has been selected along with 9 other projects from WA's Northern Agricultural Region as part of the Australian Government's Mosaic Project. The details of all the selected projects can be viewed on the following website: [www.nrm.gov.au](http://www.nrm.gov.au)

(see West Australia, Northern Agricultural Region, "Yarra Yarra farmers tackle rising groundwater").

The graph and text below show details from a bore within the influence of a constructed drain



now appears to be falling again.

Other bores in the MacPherson area showed a similar pattern, with decreased groundwater depth coinciding with increases in drain flows and discharge rates. Observations of both groundwater levels and drain flow rates over the coming months will allow us to assess how well the drains are performing. We will be particularly interested in the rate at which the watertable falls (i.e. the steepness of the curve), and whether/where a new stable level is reached.

### MU50 hydrograph, 15/3/08

This plot shows movements in the groundwater table over a two-year period, measured in a borehole (MU50) on Russell and Jan Macpherson's property, about 20 km east of Buntine. The black arrow indicates drain construction – early July, 2006. The watertable fell evenly over the following year, then levelled off at about 2.4-2.5 m, the depth of the drain.

This seemed to be the new equilibrium state, and the situation might have stayed unchanged for some time. However, in February 2008, there were two substantial rain events (open arrows), which caused the watertable to rise sharply. The level

### Water, water everywhere. Mongers Drain



## Staff News

*Congratulations to Jo and family on the arrival of Rex Joe Ashworth on the 14th March*



Rex



Lizzie

*Katie left us at the end of January to pursue a life in the Goldfields, Good luck Katie and thanks for all your efforts.*

*Lizzie Butler has just taken on the NRMO position. Please call in and introduce yourself.*

*We are looking forward to working with Aine as she assists us with redesigning our website, watch this space - [www.yarrrayarracatchment.asn.au](http://www.yarrrayarracatchment.asn.au)*