

# Community partnerships



Community planting day

Creating an informed, supportive, and involved community for future management of the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth region.

## Uniting our efforts

The Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) Recovery Project aims to strengthen the partnership between the CLLMM region's community and the government by encouraging community members to become involved in, and take ownership of, the management of the CLLMM region now and into the future.

During the recent 2006-2010 drought, the CLLMM region was on the brink of collapse. Extremely low inflows resulted in a loss of biodiversity, high salinity, acidification, erosion, and lack of connectivity between habitats.

The drought not only affected the environment, it also severely impacted on the communities of the CLLMM region.

The CLLMM community is renowned for its strong community values, with families who have lived there for generations helping to create a true sense of ownership for the CLLMM region and its health.

The CLLMM Recovery Project and the community have developed a unique partnership based on trust, respect and commitment.

This community and government partnership has evolved through strong, open, and transparent relationships which have explored how resilience can be built into the environment and the community so they can better manage when future cycles of drought hit the region.

The Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) Recovery Project is a key component of South Australia's \$610 million Murray Futures program, funded by the Australian Government's Water for the Future initiative.

The CLLMM Recovery Project, is comprised of a suite of management actions that collectively aim to improve the ecological features of the CLLMM site to deliver a healthy, productive and resilient wetland of international importance, as well as to increase capacity, knowledge and understanding across communities. It is being delivered in collaboration with the community and Ngarrindjeri, the area's traditional owners.



Government  
of South Australia



Australian Government



### Case study - Community champions

As part of the South Australian Government's Murray Futures program, DEWNR was charged with developing a long-term plan to secure a healthy future for the CLLMM region, as well as delivering emergency actions to ensure the Ramsar-listed wetlands could recover when conditions improved.

The long-term plan was developed after extensive consultation with the local community. Community champions were identified to help facilitate the consultation process. These champions are highly respected and trusted within their communities, and good communicators who act as conduits of information to and from government.

This has proved to be extremely beneficial as the champions acted as a community barometer and allowed us to gauge and understand community sentiment more consistently.

### The Community Advisory Panel

A Community Advisory Panel (CAP) was established in early 2012 to provide community advice, perspective and guidance to the CLLMM Recovery Project.

Sixteen community leaders were selected through an expression of interest process, representing a broad range of skills and expertise across the CLLMM region.

The CAP gives community members and stakeholders an opportunity the opportunity to provide input into decisions affecting the management of the CLLMM region and enables the diversity of views expressed through the CAP to be considered during decision-making processes.

The involvement of community leaders on the CAP empowers the community to be involved in decision making processes regarding the management of the CLLMM region, which increases its ability to adapt to change in the future.

### Who is involved?

The CAP brings together a wide range of community knowledge and experience from various sectors including Ngarrindjeri, local government, NRM, environment, tourism, boating, fishing, irrigation, agriculture, and social and economic development from across the CLLMM region.

The CAP enables this knowledge to be fed into the projects being undertaken by the CLLMM Recovery Project and The Living Murray Icon Site program, both of which funded by the Federal Government.

### Community interface

In 2010, two community hubs were set up in the CLLMM region at Milang and Meningie to facilitate the sharing of information between the government and the local community.

These shop fronts were a community initiative, and are driven by the Milang and Districts Community Association. They are staffed by community members.

Known as the Lakes Hubs, these accessible and centrally-located shop fronts ensure the community has access to current information about the projects that are under way or planned for the CLLMM region. The CLLMM Recovery Project receives regular local community feedback through the Hubs, which helps to guide the delivery of the projects.

The Hubs are an excellent example of a strong community and government partnership.



Inaugural Community Advisory Panel 2012

## A place where the community can be heard

The Lakes Hubs were developed as a base for community activities in the region, and as a way of sharing information between government and the community.

The Hubs are:

- the CLLMM Recovery Project's interface with the community
- a mechanism for community feedback
- a central community point for volunteer support and coordinating local on-ground works
- an employment and training provider for the community
- the centre of community project development linking with existing regional organisations.

## Lakes Hub activities

The Lakes Hub coordinates many activities throughout the CLLMM region, including:

- a weekly Lakes Hub Bulletin newsletter
- Talking Heads: community information sessions for projects occurring in the region
- organising community events for significant environmental days, such as World Wetlands Day, World Environment Day, Frog Day
- providing information displays at local shows, festivals and events to promote the work being undertaken in the CLLMM region
- coordinating education and training activities
- managing the Lakes Hub website / facebook page
- answering enquires from members of public.

## Case study: An example of empowerment

The Hubs are empowered by the CLLMM Recovery Project to make decisions on how they engage with the CLLMM community, and have full autonomy over these decisions.

The Hubs develop and organise community engagement initiatives and activities on behalf of the South Australian Government.

The Milang and Districts Community Association is responsible for deciding how the Hubs operate, and which engagement tactics are used.

This enables true ownership of the Hubs.

*The partnership established with the Milang and District Community Association and the South Australian Government at the Lakes Hub has enabled local people to contribute and share their knowledge and actively participate in the decision making for the CLLMM region.*

*The success of this partnership is due to the open and transparent relationships built over time based on trust and respect between both parties.*

Karyn Bradford (Executive Officer, Milang and District Community Association)



Lakes Hub Meningie





### Case study: World Wetlands Day 2013

About 100 people from the local community joined research scientists, Ngarrindjeri representatives, and government agency staff at a World Wetlands Day community science forum at Goolwa on Friday, 1 February 2013.

The “Sharing science, monitoring and discoveries from the Lakes and Coorong” forum provided a great opportunity for the community to learn from and talk with the researchers about the aquatic, ecological, and water and soil monitoring and research, and how it is used to manage the Lower Lakes and Coorong region.

Community members were also able to share their knowledge and observations with the scientists.

A respected Ngarrindjeri elder Mr Tom Trevorrow (now deceased), opened the forum with a Welcome to Country, and South Australian Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation and Aboriginal Affairs Ian Hunter, welcomed the attendees and spoke about the State Government’s ongoing commitment to building resilience in the CLLMM region.

The science showcase involved a series of presentations by speakers from The University of Adelaide, Flinders University, the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority, Environment Protection Authority, DEWNR, SARDI Aquatic Sciences, Goolwa to Wellington Local Action Planning Association and CSIRO.

There were interactive panel sessions throughout the day, which provided the opportunity for questions to be asked of the scientists which helped to build community knowledge and capacity, as well as discussing the environmental monitoring work occurring in the region highlighting future opportunities for community involvement.

### A partnership approach

The forum also provided an important networking opportunity for community, government agency staff and scientists, providing a valuable platform for relationship building and knowledge sharing across the agencies and the community.

The forum was an initiative of the science community, which worked in collaboration with the CLLMM Program’s Community Advisory Panel (CAP), the Lakes Hub, The Living Murray (TLM) Program and CLLMM Recovery Project staff to make this day a success.

### Further information

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