

Report: Workshop 2 – Upper Mooki Rehydration Project: ‘Kiss the Ground’ Screening, Panel Discussion & Social Event

Introduction

Three educational workshops provided by Upper Mooki Landcare Inc are to be provided as part of the contractual arrangements with LLS under the funding Australian Governments National Land Care Program and the Regional Land Partnerships and Catchment Action NSW.

The first workshop took place at “Tallawang”, Parraweena in December 2020 with a report provided.

The second workshop was held at the Royal Theatre in Quirindi on Sunday 21 March 2021 in partnership with Tamworth Regional Landcare Association. The event included the screening of “Kiss the Ground” (45 minute ‘schools version’), followed by an interactive expert panel discussion (for 1 hour) which was facilitated by journalist and NVIRO film maker Suzannah Cowley.

Participants were provided with and opportunity for networking and social time for the remainder of the evening. (*The Department of Primary Industries Rural Resilience Program contributed \$1,000 to cover the catering for the event; provided by local caterer, ZEST*).

Local Landcare Coordinator, Penny Milson made a contribution of time assisting with promotional flyer, media release and other event management tasks in the lead up to the day and also funding for a paid advertisement in the local paper and networking drinks from her Landcare Support Program budget.

Speakers for the panel discussion were:

- Glenn Morris: Holistic cattle farmer based in Inverell, holding a Masters degree in Sustainable Agriculture and former winner of the State Landcare Award for Innovation in Sustainable Farm Practices.
- Craig Carter: Landowner, “Tallawang”, Parraweena. Craig has been recognised as a leader in regenerative agriculture (2014 National Carbon Cocky (Soil Carbon Sequestration) Awards; 2019 Runner up Excellence in Landcare Farming (New England North West Landcare); 2019 State Landcare Championship for Innovation).

Blackville grazier and Rehydration Project landholder Maddy Pursehouse had the idea to screen the film and was to be joining Glenn and Craig on the panel discussion. However, she was unwell on the day and reluctantly sent her apologies.

Attendance

Seventy-five people attended the event; mostly landholders from the Liverpool Plains, Gunnedah, Tamworth and Upper Hunter Shires. However, 87 tickets had been pre-purchased through Eventbrite (\$12/adult; \$35/ family) prior to the day. In several circumstances one member of a family attended (with their partner unable to make it on the day). All participants gave their consent for photographs and filming at the event.



Report: Workshop 2 – Upper Mooki Rehydration Project: ‘Kiss the Ground’ Screening, Panel Discussion & Social Event

Content

With the slogan “the solution is right under our feet” the documentary challenged participants to consider the role that soil plays in storing carbon and improving resilience to drought.

Featuring US rancher Gabe Brown, the film endorsed land management practices that serve to regenerate natural resources, restore local water cycles and improve soil health. The four key principles highlighted were:

1. No TILL – the least amount of mechanical disturbance to soil;
2. COVER CROPS – ensuring we don’t have bare ground and maximizing plant diversity;
3. ANIMAL INTEGRATION into cropping land, planned/cell grazing and composting;
4. PERENIAL GRASSES AND TREES – sequestration of carbon; restoring the local water cycle (transpiration not evaporation!)

The panel discussion that followed was designed to give participants the opportunity to delve further into concepts raised in the film. Prior to opening up for questions expert panelists highlighted some key issues relevant to the topic:

Inverell farmer, Glenn Morris highlighted the opportunity we have to help address climate change through planned management of soils and pastures. Glenn described farmers as being ‘on the ‘frontline’.

Craig Carter of “Tallawang” highlighted the economic benefits of managing for soil health. Since taking on the property 20 years ago (and being told he “Wouldn’t be able to run more than 100 cows and calves”), regenerative practices on “Tallawang” have enabled him to significantly increase his stocking rate with 550 calves expected by December.

Kiss the Ground Panel Discussion

A panel discussion was hosted by Susannah Cowley, ABC presenter, Journalist and Film-maker from NViro Media, who provided the following notes to this report:

“My goal, as host of the Kiss the Ground screening as part of the Upper Mooki Landscape Rehydration Project, was to draw out the key messages in the film and engage the audience in the relevance of that message to the Australian environment, the local agricultural landscape and the work of local landholders. It was important to allow enough time to build confidence in the audience to ask questions and engage in the debate and share their opinions.

The key discussion focus would be around the question: Can regenerative farming be more profitable than traditional agricultural practices and can the draw down of carbon through



Report: Workshop 2 – Upper Mooki Rehydration Project: ‘Kiss the Ground’ Screening, Panel Discussion & Social Event

broad uptake of regenerative farming practices as discussed in the film play a key role addressing climate change?

Key Questions for Glenn:

- You have been raising awareness around the need for government and the Australian community to do more to address Climate Change for decades do you see yourself as the Australian Gabe Brown?*
- Can you briefly share your story regenerating two farms from degraded landscapes to regenerated landscapes over the past decade....*
- Explain Soil Organic Carbon? How to get it and it's potential to reverse global warming?*
- How bad is our situation and why do we need to change so quickly?*
- How important is this window we have now with the drought breaking to protect ground cover start broadly protecting soil health and sequestering carbon in the local environment.?*
- What do you believe will happen you believe if we don't collaborate for this change?*

Key Questions for Craig:

- Craig as a local holistic management educator and regenerative farming grazier tell me about the work you do supporting landholders to change their practices?*
- Share your experience of regenerating Tallawang your property over the past two decades.?*
- Discuss the idea that regen systems can be more profitable?*
- What are some of the barriers to significant uptake of regenerative farming practices?*
- How important is it that banks / financial systems start to value regenerative farming and the landholders who are putting these practices into place to build soil health and support better environmental outcomes are rewarded financially?*
- How important is it that we get a national soil testing strategy including soil carbon monitoring program that will reward farmers for regenerating their environment.?*
- How important are projects such as the Upper Mooki Landscape Rehydration project in bringing the community together to collaborate and support change?*

Overall I felt the event was an important opportunity to include the wider community in the project and facilitate a discussion around climate change and regenerative farming practices in relation to the local environment and agriculture. The personal stories of the panelists in their work as graziers and educators / activists brought extra interest to the discussion and ensured the information was relevant to the local community. The Q&A also explored the local impacts of climate change and how the community has been working together to build support networks through Landcare groups and LLS Northwest. It was pleasing to see a



Report: Workshop 2 – Upper Mooki Rehydration Project: ‘Kiss the Ground’ Screening, Panel Discussion & Social Event

range of audience members participate in asking questions to panelists that drew out a respectful and meaningful conversation.

Event Evaluation

A brief online survey was distributed via email to participants, three days after the event (Wednesday 24 March). In the majority of circumstances, we had one email address per couple/family. Eleven (11) responses had been received by Tuesday 30 March.

Participants were asked to rate each component of our event. Results were as follows

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	No response
Film	0	0	2	7	2
Panel Discussion	0	0	6	4	1
Social Event	0	0	7	4	0

Event participants were invited to describe the main message they took away from the film. Some examples of participant responses were as follows: -

“How important land care is and how disconnected our communities are from nature. The passion for this subject runs deep for myself and others who are interested and motivated to make change happen”

“Working with the land rather than against it pays off eventually. We have to rethink and take the plunge, get away from traditional thinking. Listen to the land”

“We can be a powerful force in fighting climate change”

“We need to drawdown more carbon and can do that through better farming practices”

Participants were asked to indicate whether they would consider making changes to the management of their property or block based on the themes in the film and the discussion that followed.

Response	Number of Responses
Yes	2
No	0
Unsure	0
Already made some changes and intend to do more in future	9



Report: Workshop 2 – Upper Mooki Rehydration Project: ‘Kiss the Ground’ Screening, Panel Discussion & Social Event

Participants described a range of changes they were considering or already putting into practice including:

- Planting trees
- Keeping groundcover
- Higher density cattle grazing/planned grazing
- Reducing use of herbicide
- Trial of multi species cover crops and bio char
- Monitoring reactions of nature in response to management changes
- ‘Generative Agroecology’

Final comments from participants praised the venue, catering and the opportunity to mix with like minded people. One participant suggested a ‘short film festival’ which screens a range of Australian based regenerative ag stories. Another participant invited organisers to ‘honor the women who are emerging in the regenerative agriculture space.

We need to see the full spectrum of practitioners, their hits and misses, wins and wants - and those bootstrappers who do it without an audience!



Report: Workshop 2 – Upper Mooki Rehydration Project: ‘Kiss the Ground’ Screening, Panel Discussion & Social Event



Upper Mooki Landcare proudly presents a short film, panel discussion & social event!

Interested in healthy soils & soil carbon?

Part of the Upper Mooki Rehydration Project

Bring the kids!




TAMWORTH REGIONAL LANDCARE ASSOCIATION


WOLLABADAN CREEK CATCHMENT COMMUNITY

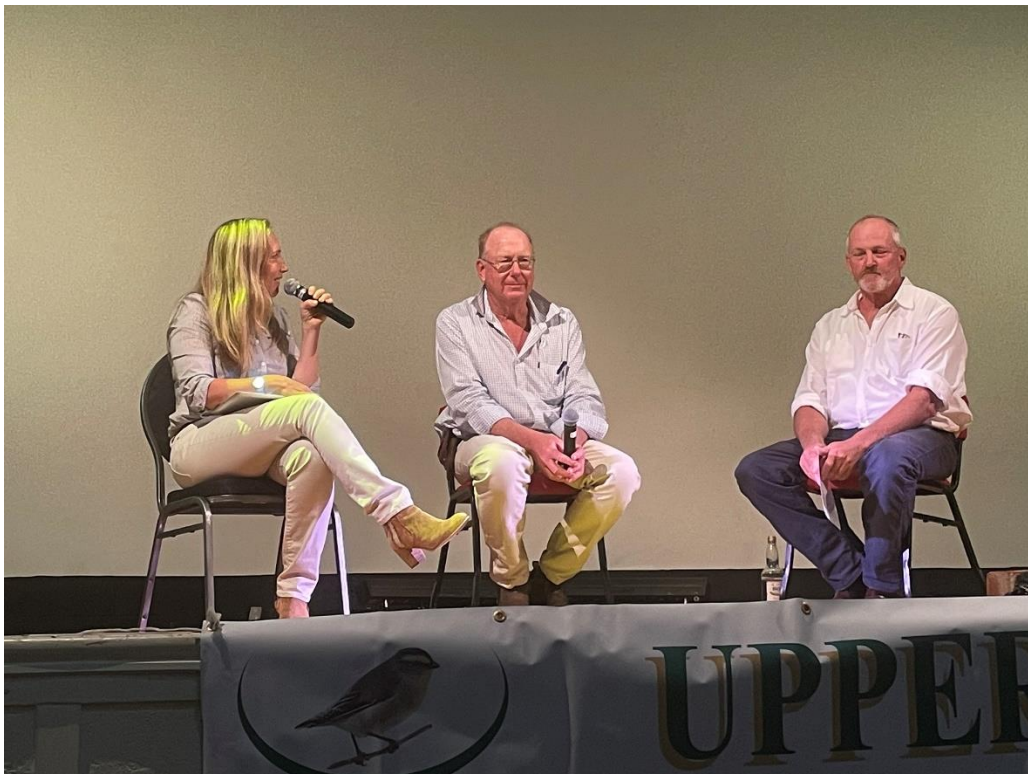
SUNDAY 21 MARCH 2021
ROYAL THEATRE, HENRY ST, QUIRINDI
3:30 for 4pm start til 6:45pm
PANEL DISCUSSION & REFRESHMENTS
Special Guest: Acclaimed land steward & award winning landholder Glenn Morris in conversation with journalist & filmmaker Suzannah Cowley

RSVP Essential. TICKETS: Adult; \$12, Family; \$35. No tickets at the door.
Visit: <https://kissthegroundquirindi.eventbrite.com.au>
Enquiries to Maddy Pursehouse 0488 900 881/Landcare Coordinator penny@trla.org.au

This event is supported by North West Local Land Services, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.
Our thanks to the Department of Primary Industries Rural Resilience Program for their support.



Report: Workshop 2 – Upper Mooki Rehydration Project: ‘Kiss the Ground’ Screening, Panel Discussion & Social Event



Report: Workshop 2 – Upper Mooki Rehydration Project: ‘Kiss the Ground’ Screening, Panel Discussion & Social Event



Report: Workshop 2 – Upper Mooki Rehydration Project: ‘Kiss the Ground’ Screening, Panel Discussion & Social Event



Photos supplied by Nigel Christenson from NVIRO Media.

This report was prepared by Nicky Chirlian, Upper Mooki Rehydration Project and Penny Milson, Local Landcare Coordinator (Liverpool Plains Region).



Local Land
Services

