

## Community Response to Blackwater

### Western Murray Land Improvement Group Inc



### A community initiated response to fish deaths

#### The issue

Fish deaths attributed to hypoxic blackwater that followed the 2016 flood event sparked a passionate response from the Edward-Wakool community. It had a profound impact on people who care deeply about preserving the environment in which they value living.

#### The solution

A proactive response was initiated by a small group of committed locals to address fish death in the river systems. One individual had created a homemade 'fish refuge' during the 2010-11 hypoxic events using a pump spray system he designed to temporarily increase the level of dissolved oxygen in the river. This idea motivated other community members to build or donate their own aeration devices. These aerators were installed in October and November of 2016, with three sites on the Edward river and two sites on the Wakool river. Field observations noted that fish, turtles and crustaceans spent time near the aerators.

#### The impact

Community wellbeing was improved through this project; all involved felt better for proactively doing something to minimise fish death in their local rivers. The hypoxic blackwater response galvanised a sense of community responsibility and ownership of river system health. It brought people together from many walks of life for a common cause and provided a sense of action in an otherwise helpless situation. Landholder Tim emphasised: "If I save one fish I'll be happy...my conscience doesn't allow me to just sit here and do nothing."

Murray LLS funded a report to document this community initiative. The report outlined opportunities to improve the response process in the future. This involved contingency planning such as volunteer engagement, site selection, equipment reviews and ongoing communication of the project to potential collaborators. At the time of writing this case study, several angling clubs have expressed interest in funding their own aerators for use in the future,



### Key facts

- Collaboration facilitated sharing of information, ideas & resources
- Community response improved wellbeing
- Galvanised a sense of responsibility and ownership of river system health
- Potential for future project advancement

### Project Partners



The Local Landcare Coordinator Initiative Program that enables the promotion of these case studies on the Gateway, is funded by the NSW Government and is supported through the partnership of Local Land Services and Landcare NSW

