



# Newsletter

## President - Bob Crawford

The Old Man Plain (part of the YCS) is eerily quiet now as the environment copes with what was a hard landing into drought conditions. Gone is the usual greeting I get from the Brown (ventriloquist) Song Lark. I suppose he has flown to a nearby refuge!

Dr Dale McNeil is still searching for that “slippery little sucker” - Galaxias Rostratus. If he catches one, he assures me that the YCS Long Term Environmental Water Plan (LTEWP) for low flow conditions will be a certainty. I want at least a sighting so that we can ramp up a base flow of (320MI/day) emanating from the Yanco Weir.

The Board has been busy coping with all the departmental activity of late. The Board is confident it has a handle on what happens to a MI of flow as it travels down the YCS. We have a comprehensive list of ‘needs’ that must be satisfied by this flow and we have engaged with the community to determine our ‘needs’ for historical and contemporary cultural purposes.

The Murrumbidgee Water Resource Plan (WRP) and accompanying Water Sharing Plan (WSP) are being discussed. The Board has a couple of issues with these Plans – mainly to do with the location of the ‘End of System’ telemetry site and the superfluous need for all the complicated environmental water classifications plus the extravagant need for “piggy back” flood events in the 3 or 4 dry years out of 11 years. The Board feels these provisions should be displaced by the comprehensive Long Term Environmental Watering Plan.

The SDL chapter in the proposed WRP is another matter. The Board has urged Minister Pavey to re-acquaint the NSW Government with the demands made on NSW water resources by this chapter.

The Board has a policy to engage with the SDLAM Project Team and I am confident YACTAC’s team can make a difference and focus on the long term needs (economic, environmentally etc) of the YCS.

Cheers and let’s hope that the Brown Song Lark (*Cincloramphus crurularis*) returns soon.

Bob Crawford.

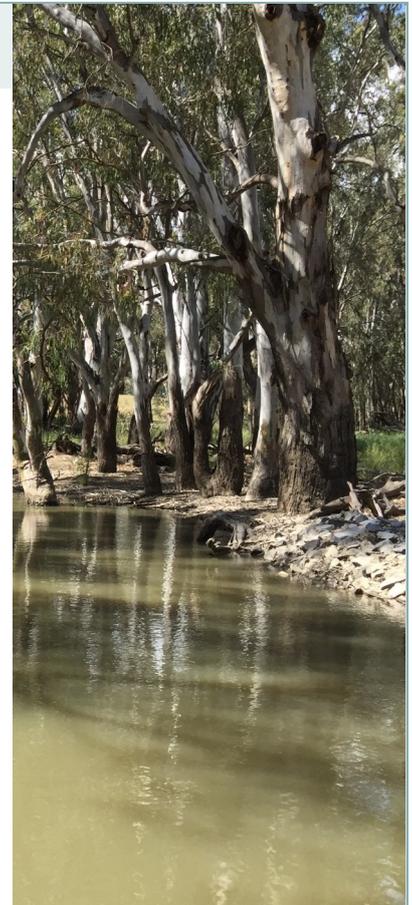
PS. and Dale can net that “slippery little sucker” soon.

## Annual General Meeting - 5 August

Council Hall, Jerilderie 1pm - light refreshments - all welcome.

Guest Speakers: MDBA, DPIE Environment, DPIE Water.

Projects Update - with details.



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### EMAIL OPTION

- Would you prefer to receive this newsletter via email to take advantage of the links to additional information?
- Please contact Tanya on **0408 833 801**

**Murrumbidgee  
Environmental Water  
Allowance Reference Group -  
MEWARG**

- Watering Winter/Spring

Small scale watering events proposed under the very dry condition level in the LTWP.

- Women in Water-Darlington Point
- Long Term Watering Plan update
- Monitoring update

**Committee Training**

Landcare presented training to the committee and community members covering: Corporate Governance; Roles and Responsibilities of the Board; Strategic Plans, Business Plans, Action Plans; WHS.

**IPART - Bulk Water Charges**

WaterNSW applied for an extension to the current water charges. The review will commence in May 2020, instead of May 2019.

**Spreading the Message**

Meetings with:  
Michael McCormack  
Helen Dalton  
Melinda Pavey  
John Barilaro  
Justin Clancy  
Sarah Hanson-Young  
DPIE - David Leslie, David Clarke, Rod Hardwick, Paul Doyle, Jody Swirepik  
Murray Technical Group  
ABC 4 Corners

Articles in:  
The Narrandera Argus  
Southern Riverina News  
Pastoral Times  
The Guardian

Radio:  
ABC Riverina  
and many others.

**Natural Resource Manager - Dr Dale McNeil**

**Billabong/Yanco/Colombo Strategic Plan**

My main focus has been creating a Strategic Plan, for the next ten years, and a shorter-term Business Plan and Implementation Plan to set out YACTAC's objectives and identify what we can do to start kicking goals. This will give us a clear future direction. It will also enable us to check our progress and ensure we are focusing on the right things even after six, eight or ten years.

Once the Board is happy with a draft of this plan we will send it out to all members and WAL holders to get your feedback.

We have also been working to build up relationships with stakeholders and partners in preparation for delivering our activities. I look forward to getting out onto your farms and working with each of you to improve the creek and wetland environments in your patch.

I have applied for a number of funding partnerships that so far have not been successful, in particular a very large (\$2.4 million) project looking at Aboriginal Agriculture and how we could re-introduce aspects of the native agricultural system onto farms, to add new products/markets; and a proposal to host our own Landcare Coordinator in the Yanco. We will continue to work with existing Landcare Coordinators in the Riverina and Murray Landcare groups to enhance service levels.

We will keep building relationships and working on funding proposals to bring projects and investment into the region. There are a few projects underway, a farm dams project, threatened frog, fish and platypus monitoring that are starting up. I'd love to hear from any of you who would like to meet up and look around your own environment, especially if you have nice creek or wetland sections or even farm dams/water storages that you think are or could be nice wetland environments if we can work on them. I look forward to working with you all to secure and improve the landscape we love and live in.

**Farm Dams**

Farm Dams are one of the few spots in the agricultural landscape where water sits all year round. However, most farm dams are kept clear of wetland vegetation and have little ecological value.

We will be working with Australian National University and Riverina LLS to try to raise awareness of how good our dams could be for native biota if they were restored with selected water plants and native critters. Our farm dams can be improved to keep a permanent refuge habitat for our threatened species such as Southern Bell frogs, birds and endangered wetland fish.

We will be planning to have a field day and to identify farm dams to trial habitat restoration and/or be a demonstration site if you have a nice dam already.

As these programs were designed in the slopes, our local idea of farm dams or water storages can look very different to those in the slopes. ANU is keen to find out what we use as water storages so they can rethink their approach for the western creeks.

I will be travelling through the catchment with ANU in the next month or so and would love to have some sites where we would be welcome to come and have a look and chat to you.

If you are in the Morundah area (Top Section), please get in touch with me so we can start improving the habitat quality of our farms.

Dr Dale McNeil - 0428 101 318



## Executive Officer - Tanya Thompson

Every week there are meetings held with either government agencies, ministers, elected members, local government, NSWIC, local action groups and/or community members. It has never been as busy but this is a very important time in the history of YACTAC. So many changes, one could say challenges or opportunities (depending upon your mind set), on the horizon. The decisions currently being made will set the direction for future generations.



It is crucial YACTAC is at the forefront of any negotiations that may alter any of the creeks or flows within those creeks.

We were interviewed for 4 Corners on 1 June but did not make the final cut for the program. We were hoping to promote our healthy ecosystem and community engagement. We have been told, however, the footage may appear on another investigative ABC program such as the 7:30 Report.

## DoI Water + OEH = DPIE

With the recent election in NSW government departments have undergone another name change. Department of Industry - Water and Office of Environment and Heritage no longer exist. They are now a division of the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment: DPIE - Water, DPIE - Environment.

## DPIE - Water SDLAM

All the background work and media have had a positive impact with the department ramping up in preparation for formal consultation to commence. We have managed to secure a presentation directly addressing YCS SDLAM projects at our Annual General Meeting, so don't miss this. There is also a tour organised for local government /interdepartmental representatives, NSW elected members and others to visit the Yanco Weir, Tarabah Weir and selected areas during August. This tour is to inform leaders about the top end of the Yanco Creek System and how delivery will affect the entire YCS. Additional tours are also planned in the near future.



## DPIE - Environment

We are in discussions with James Maguire about co funding work around Wanganella Swamp to facilitate a long over due watering event. The more we can develop these partnerships the greater chance YACTAC has to secure future funding. Funding sources have changed dramatically and it is now essential to have close, goal orientated, working relationships with various organisations and departments.

## Water Resource Plans - WRP

There was a public meeting held in Jerilderie to launch the draft Murrumbidgee Water Resource Plan and to explain the opportunity for feedback. It was heartening to see over 90 people attend this meeting and ask such important questions of the presenters, although most questions weren't answered in any detail. The large attendance sent an important message reinforcing how concerned the local community is whenever water, or the availability to water, is discussed. A submission was made by YACTAC, in addition to NSWIC also developing a valley wide submission.

## NSWIC

- Snowy 2.0  
Contractors are on site  
Works to commence at  
Tantangra Autumn 2020  
2000 Mega Watts capacity.
- MDBA  
Whole of river solution  
required.  
Improve communication.  
Interim channel sharing  
arrangements to be  
discussed.
- Independent Social &  
Economic Panel  
Robbie Sefton chair  
Final report 30 April 2020  
email updates:  
[www.basin-socio-economic.com.au](http://www.basin-socio-economic.com.au)
- Productivity Commission  
Basin Plan 5 year  
assessment.

## WaterNSW CAG

- WaterNSW proposed 20  
year infrastructure plan  
launched.
- Currently:  
Yanco Creek 200ML/day  
diversion.  
Finley Escape - no inflows.  
Low inflows from CCD &  
DC800.  
Trade open into the  
Murrumbidgee.
- Drought Stage 2 planning, in  
preparation for continued  
dry conditions.

## YACTAC Website

Google: landcare YACTAC

<https://landcare.nsw.gov.au/groups/yanco-creek-and-tributaries-advisory-council>

**YANCO CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES  
ADVISORY COUNCIL INC.**

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Russell Ford 0429 425 798  
Mark Wettenhall 0427 861 255

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Bob Crawford 0427 875 955  
Sally Dye 0427 875 940  
Colin McCrabb 0428 847 558

**Executive Officer**

Tanya Thompson 0408 833 801

**Environment Officer**

Dale McNeil 0428 101 318

Please contact us to discuss any matter regarding the creek system, riparian areas or concerns you may have.

If you know of any change of ownership of property please send details to the Executive Officer, so our records can be kept up to date.



## Wetland Watering Plans

Finally, there is a determination to water Wanganella wetlands during August. Whilst it will not be a large watering event at least there is some water being delivered to the wetlands. To get it there, this time, DPIE - Env. is delivering the water via a channel on Boonoke but we have been assured that the natural creek system will be used to deliver water to the swamp once more water is available. The wetland will not be filled completely, just a small volume to keep the wetland alive. Putting together a good wetland plan will allow us to get more wetlands onto that agenda.



## Creek Country Alliance

We would like to take this opportunity to praise the work of Helene Mortlock for the hours she spends showcasing and promoting our unique creek system. Helene never misses an opportunity to spread the word and advocate for the continuation of our healthy and vibrant creek and riparian areas. Helene is the powerhouse behind the Creek Country Alliance facebook page and also pursues any media opportunity to advance dialogue with government departments. Helene is supported by many others assisting behind the scenes, informing locals and others who may not have internet access.

## Creek Weed Control

Matt Wooden took the opportunity to work on 36 known weed infested sites and 9 new sites. A detailed budget and work plan for the next 12 months is being discussed and will soon be finalised.

## Community Platypus Monitoring

We have one of the most inland populations of platypuses, a great indicator that we are doing OK at looking after our creek so far, but we need to work hard to protect what is left of a once abundant marsupial fauna.

We are developing a Platypus project to find out more about these awesome and iconic critters in our creeks. The Australian Platypus Conservancy is going to work with us to understand and protect our platypuses (platypi?) over the coming years. (see <https://platypus.asn.au/>)



To start, we need to collect as much knowledge as we can about where platypus have been seen (even in the dark distant past) within the Billabong, Yanco and Colombo creek system.

Over the coming months we will be building up community platypus monitoring project with your support. But first we need your information of when and where you have seen (or heard tales of) platypuses in our creeks and any other information you might have about them.

Once we get a general idea of where and how many we might have we can look into some more detailed science linking to universities to understand and protect them.

Have you seen one? Heard of a spot where they are? Are you interested in learning more about them or lurking around the creeks trying to find them?