



Australian Government



Government  
of South Australia



# MURRAY **FUTURES**

## Lower Lakes & Coorong Recovery

**Community Hubs Performance Review**

June 2011

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Aim of Performance Review

The first of two Community Hubs was established at Milang in 2009 under the auspices of the Lower Lakes Bioremediation and Revegetation Project. At the time it was established, it was determined that a review would be undertaken to assess whether the project was successfully meeting its outcomes and objectives, and whether any improvements could be made. This report is a performance review of the Community Hubs from 2009–2011. The aim of the review is to:

- Describe the Community Hubs, their interactions and strategic context
- Assess the defined Community Hubs outcomes and analyse to what extent they have been achieved
- Document key learnings from the project
- Identify issues to be addressed
- Make recommendations for the future of the Community Hubs

The \$10 million Lower Lakes Bioremediation and Revegetation Project is funded by the Australian Government, supported by the South Australian Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

### Summary of report findings

The first Community Hub was established in 2009 as part of the Lower Lakes Bioremediation and Revegetation Project, however, it is anticipated that after 30 September 2011, the Community Hubs will be managed as a key component of the whole-of-CLLMM Communications and Community Engagement activity. This reflects the fact that the Hubs are now working closely with more than one implementation project in the CLLMM region, and that they can be managed more effectively from a central point within CLLMM with a specific focus on Communication and Community Engagement. This is a sensible approach given the broad reach of Hubs activities, and the close relationship between its goals and outputs and the strategic goals of the CLLMM Program as a whole.

From reviewing the outcomes, it is clear that the funding provided to establish and maintain the work of the Hubs has provided a raft of benefits. An analysis of the achievement of project outcomes has shown that 20 out of 21 outcomes have been met successfully, with several having been met to a standard higher than expected and with benefits greater than expected. Details of performance against each expected outcome are provided in section 2 below, however, it is clear that the net benefits from the project have been higher than anticipated.

This review has also provided an opportunity to review those areas where outcomes have not been met as well, or where there are issues, and has recommended actions or changes to improve performance.

The Community Hubs were established at a time of environmental and socio-economic crisis in the region, and as such, it is relatively easy to see what a positive and proactive role they have played in the implementation of the CLLMM project and the improvement in government and community relations. The Community Hubs have helped the community to make sense of difficult conditions and have provided them with a genuine sense of ownership of the complex operations needed to manage risks. Because the Hubs have been there through the hard times, it is important not to underestimate their importance now as conditions improve.

The Community Hubs have built up considerable levels of trust and engagement with the local community, which in turn has had positive spin-offs for government. The Hubs have provided an effective mechanism for increasing community 'buy-in' to the CLLMM project and enabling the community to become more directly involved with management of their region. The Community Hubs have been the catalyst for many improvements in communications, community engagement and program delivery, with the symbol of this project and this improved relationship being the two 'shop-fronts' in Milang and Meningie.

Now, as the focus of projects in the region is to increase resilience in both the environment and the community, the Community Hubs remains an important initiative. The Community Hubs are in a strong position to continue to support and add value to project implementation in the area. The funding which has been allocated to the project and the way in which it has been carried out so far can be seen to be an effective and strategic use of seed funding which has nurtured and grown a community-based organisation which is well-situated to continue to provide substantial benefits for the implementation of the CLLMM long-term plan. As such, the seed funding has provided good value for money. It is highly unlikely that the same benefits could be achieved by a method which was not firmly-rooted in the community and did not provide a tangible presence in the community. Even if an alternative method were developed which provided similar benefits, it is hard to see that it could be a cheaper option.

## Recommendations

In light of the above summary, this review recommends that the Community Hubs continue along current lines, with funding and management through the CLLMM program or equivalent. To improve future operations, it would be beneficial to review the large number of objectives and outcomes and develop objectives and outcomes which are measurable and 'SMART'. It is also recommended that the issues and gaps identified by this performance review are addressed in line with the suggestions in section 3.2 of this report.

Finally, it is recommended that the findings of this Performance Review are considered when developing requirements for the Hubs in the future.

# 1 CONTEXT

## 1.1 Community Hubs

The first of two Community Hubs was established at Milang in 2009 under the auspices of the \$10 million Lower Lakes Bioremediation and Revegetation Project, funded by the Australian Government with support from the South Australian Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The Community Hubs have been administered through that program with assistance from the CLLMM Communications and Community Engagement team.

The Community Hubs were initially proposed by the Milang Progress Association and were subsequently supported by the South Australian and Australian Governments through the Lower Lakes Bioremediation and Revegetation Project. The Hubs were developed as a base for community engagement activities in the region and as a way of sharing information between government and the community.

In order to implement the project, the Milang Progress Association (now the Milang and Districts Community Association) received a grant of \$220,000 for stage 1, of which \$93,000 was dedicated to establish the Community Hub at Milang.

The establishment of the Hub at Milang aimed to facilitate improvement in relations and information sharing between government and local communities. The Hub would inform and engage local communities and co-ordinate specific on-ground activities locally, including community nurseries and other community training opportunities.

The Milang Hub was launched by Minister Jay Weatherill, Minister of Environment and Conservation in December 2009.



*Minister Jay Weatherill at the launch of the Milang Lakes Hub, December 2009*

In November 2010, a second Community Hub was launched in Meningie to provide the Lake Albert community with access to information about CLLMM Program projects underway around Lake Albert and the Coorong, as well as to encourage community involvement in local projects.



***Launch of Meningie Lakes Hub, November 2010***

Ministerial Media Releases about the launch of each of the Hub are provided in Appendix A of this report.

The establishment and continuation of the Community Hubs and associated projects has supported a number of long-term economic and environmental outcomes within the region. The CLLMM Bioremediation and Revegetation project has provided continued support for the two Community Hubs located in Milang and Meningie. The Hubs were originally funded to 30 June 2011 as part of the Lower Lakes Bioremediation and Revegetation Project, funded by the Australian Government and supported by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. This funding will cease in September 2011, after which time the CLLMM long-term plan has allocated a further three-years of funding to maintain this service.

Some of the key features of the Community Hubs are:

- The Hubs are the CLLMM Project's interface with the broader community. They enable information sharing, and create a mechanism for regular community feedback;
- The Hubs are a central community point for mobilising volunteer support and coordinating on-ground works locally;
- The Community Hubs provide training and employment for the community;
- The Hubs are the centre of community project development, linking into existing regional organisations, their initiatives and capacity;
- These Community Hubs were established at the request and consensus of the community specifically for the CLLMM Program.

From the government perspective, the way in which the Hubs have achieved the outcomes and objectives outlined in the original project briefs is analysed in more detail in sections 2.2 and 2.3 below. From a community perspective the way in which the Hubs provide value for the local

environment and community has been summarised in the following statement from a member of the Community Hubs team.

### **Case Study - The Community Hubs**

The Community Hubs, firstly at Milang and then at Meningie have succeeded in building bridges, developing networks and strengthening links between agencies, organisations and communities. Hubs have enabled participation from a wide range of stakeholders and through networking, community involvement and conversation have encouraged complementary activities which have leveraged funds from other organisations and funding bodies to meet local needs. An example of this is the Lakes Eco Skills Network which is training local people in conservation and land management with the support of both state and national govt funding and a partnership with TAFE SA. Volunteering in community projects funded through the Lower Lakes Bioremediation and Revegetation Project such as the Acid Sulfate Soil monitoring, Community Nurseries Network and Community planting have given the students relevant hands on experience and provided paid employment for a number of people. Local spending through purchasing and employment has also helped some businesses to get through the crisis.

As the Lakes and Coorong begin the long road to recovery so too does the community. Certainly there is more optimism in the Lakes communities with the return of the water but there is also the underlying fear that we could find ourselves back in a similar situation in the not too distant future. Within the community there is a strong focus and drive on firmly establishing the many fledgling projects which have commenced in the past 18 months and which have begun to build resilience both in this wonderful wetland and within our communities. The Lakes communities provided a significant contribution to the development of the Long-term Plan for the CLLMM and over the past 18 months have shown their dedication, commitment and passion to be active participants in the implementation of the plan. Govt funding has been matched by volunteer contribution to Lakes projects. We have shown that government and community can be better working together than apart, sharing a common vision and undertaking on ground action which will give us healthy communities, healthy economies and a healthy environment. Our future depends on it. – **Karyn Bradford, Community Hubs, 2011**

## **1.2 Strategic Overview**

### **1.2.1 Australian Government goals**

The Australian Government has developed a high-level program called 'Caring for our Country'. The proposed outcome of this initiative is that by 2013, Australia will be progressing towards a healthier environment and the sustainable use of natural resources. As this outcome is



dependant on the collective actions of many individuals, groups and communities, their actions will be strategically supported and resourced.

The Community Hubs are designed to move towards this outcome by providing direct community support to create sustainability in the community organisations and community governance mechanisms that persist in the future. In relation to the priorities identified under 'Caring for our Country', the Community Hubs will contribute to:

- improving access to knowledge and skills to urban and regional communities in managing natural resources sustainably, and helping protect the environment;
- increasing engagement and participation rates of urban and regional communities in activities to manage natural resources and to help protect the environment;
- positioning regional natural resource management organisations to deliver best practice landscape conservation and sustainable land planning to communities and land managers within their regions;
- ensuring the continued use, support, and reinvigoration of traditional ecological knowledge to underpin biodiversity conservation.

### 1.2.2 South Australia's Strategic Plan

South Australia's Strategic Plan (SASP) has the following vision:

South Australia's Strategic Plan is a commitment to making this state the best it can be – prosperous, environmentally rich, culturally stimulating, offering its citizens every opportunity to live well and succeed. Our plan expresses our values; its targets reflect our priorities.

We will achieve a better future for South Australia by keeping our communities strong, maintaining an international outlook, and promoting knowledge, inquiry and innovation. By aspiring to be the best, we can better secure a good quality of life for South Australians of all ages and backgrounds.

From within this overarching vision, the Community Hubs have contributed to:

- Keeping our communities strong
- Promoting knowledge and inquiry.

One of the specific SASP targets the Hubs support is Target T5.9 - Regional population levels: maintain regional South Australia's share of the state population.

By supporting and providing a focus for positive activities in a region undergoing difficulties, the Hubs have contributed to meeting this target.

### 1.2.3 DENR Corporate Plan

The Community Hubs initiative is linked to the DENR Corporate Plan through the following goals:

**Goal 2: The environment is valued and enjoyed**



DENR Role 2.4 Management of projects shared with the community and volunteers to build capacity in natural resources management and to improve the condition of the environment and natural resources.

DENR Priority 2c: In partnership with Aboriginal people and communities, preserve ecological knowledge and find ways for that knowledge to be understood and shared.

DENR Priority 2d: Increase primary producers' and rural communities' active involvement in integrated natural resources management in South Australia.

**Goal 3: The environment is integral to development decisions.**

DENR Role 3.2 Provision of accessible and comprehensible environment and natural resources information to help government and communities make well-informed development decisions.

## 1.3 Coorong, Lower Lakes & Murray Mouth Program

The Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) Program is administered through the South Australian Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). It is part of the South Australian Government's Murray Futures program, funded by the Australian Government's Water for the Future initiative and the South Australian Government. The CLLMM Program also manages the \$10 million Lower Lakes Bioremediation and Revegetation Project, funded by the Australian Government and supported by DENR.

### 1.3.1 Long-term vision and outcomes for the CLLMM Program

The long-term plan for the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Program is based on the following vision:

To secure a future for the CLLMM site as a healthy, productive and resilient wetland system that maintains its international importance. Achieving this will directly support the local economy and all its communities.

In order to achieve the vision, the CLLMM Program has identified six high-level outcomes.

- 1 The site maintains historical salinity gradients, species abundance, variable lake levels, and an open Murray Mouth.
- 2 The biological and ecological features (or ecological character) that give the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth wetland its international significance are protected.
- 3 The ecosystem is more resilient and can adapt and respond to a drier climate.
- 4 The culture of the traditional owners, the Ngarrindjeri, is preserved through partnerships and flows of suitable quality.
- 5 The regional economy and local communities that depend on the health of the site are sustained.

- 6 Capacity, knowledge and scientific responsiveness are increased within the community and those working for the region.

The vision and outcomes combine to indicate that the key emphasis for work in the region is on actions designed to build resilience in the system over the long-term. This resilience applies not only to the environment, but to local communities, where increased knowledge and capacity-building is seen as a key way to a sustainable future.

### **1.3.2 Where do the Community Hubs fit in?**

The second part of the vision for the CLLMM site ('directly support the local economy and all its communities') refers to the importance of supporting a resilient and sustainable community. The Community Hubs were established as a mechanism for achieving part of that vision.

More specifically, the Community Hubs map into two high-level outcomes for the CLLMM program by contributing directly to:

- Outcome 5 The regional economy and local communities that depend on the health of the site are sustained.
- Outcome 6 The capacity, knowledge and science-based responsiveness are increased within the community and those working for the region.

The Community Hubs have performed an important function during a time of environmental and socio-economic crisis, and continue to provide a central point of contact for the local community through which they can find out about CLLMM projects and how they can be involved. They also provide a base for all contractors, government officers and members of the community working in the region, and continue to act as a strong link between the local community and government.

## **1.4 Lower Lakes Bioremediation and Revegetation Project**

### **1.4.1 Background**

In 2008, record low inflows to the River Murray through drought and over-allocation of water across the Murray-Darling Basin were having a significant social, cultural, economic and environmental impact on the Lower Lakes and Coorong region.

Water levels were dropping, salinity levels rising, lakebed being exposed and eroded, and wetlands acidifying. This situation was unprecedented.

This was a period of crisis during which the Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Ramsar site faced numerous challenges. The principal issue was the extensive drying of Lakes Alexandrina and Albert, which exposed thousands of hectares of actual and potential acid sulfate soils.

Modelling indicated that if lake levels continue to drop there is a risk of the remaining water bodies of the lakes and tributaries becoming acid. Falling lake levels also resulted in increases in salinity; reductions in submerged and fringing lake vegetation; disconnection and drying of wetlands; reductions in threatened fish species; and increased health risks from sand and dust movement. This Bioremediation and Revegetation Project, was designed to assist in addressing some of the short-term ecological issues facing the Lower Lakes region.

### **1.4.2 Establishment of the Lower Lakes Bioremediation and Revegetation Project**

In June 2009, possibly the largest revegetation trials of their kind in Australia were carried out on exposed lakebed soils around the Lower Lakes.

The early success of the vegetation trials in managing acid sulfate soils led to the Australian Government funding a \$10 million vegetation program to help reduce the risk of lake acidification. The funding was announced in November 2009.

The Lower Lakes Bioremediation and Revegetation Project aimed to stabilise soils, encourage bioremediation and provide habitat for native animals. By achieving this, the project would contribute to the goal of securing a healthy, sustainable future for the region.

The project involved engaging and supporting a network of local community nurseries to propagate plants, facilitating information exchange between local communities and government, and planning and planting activities, weed management, and fencing to protect lakebed vegetation from stock. The two Community Hubs were established to provide a base for the community nurseries program, communication sharing, co-ordination of work in the area and local training opportunities.

The four key areas which were the focus of the Bioremediation and Revegetation Project were:

- 1 Vegetation
- 2 Fencing
- 3 Community Involvement and
- 4 Research

Under community involvement, the main actions identified in the work plan were to enable to community to:

- Engage in decisions
- To be involved in actions
- To undertake research
- To support adaptation.

The Hubs were established to support this work, and the extent to which they have done that and met the more detailed project objectives will be assessed in section 2 of this report.

### 1.4.3 'Working together – Community Involvement Plan'

In June 2009, the Bioremediation and Revegetation Project produced a framework for community involvement in the environmental rehabilitation of the Lower Lakes entitled *Working Together: Community Involvement Plan*. This was developed and delivered with local communities for work that was carried out as part of the project, funded by the Australian Government and managed by the Department for Environment and Heritage.

The Community Involvement Plan identified a range of mechanisms to engage local communities in a range of activities necessary for the delivery of the Bioremediation and Revegetation Project. The framework sought to support the establishment of long-lasting and meaningful relationships between government and local communities in the CLLMM region.

The Community Involvement Plan also provided a functional definition of the community as 'those residing in or having an interest in the environmental rehabilitation of the Lower Lakes area'. This includes (but is not limited to) the following:

- Residents of Meningie, Milang, Goolwa, Wellington, Hindmarsh Island, Clayton Bay and surrounding areas.
- Community groups, businesses, organisations and associations operating in the CLLMM region
- The Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority and Community
- Local Action Planning, Landcare and catchment groups
- Local landholders and land managers
- Land owners/managers with properties adjacent to lakeshore boundaries
- Local and commercial contractors
- Local Government.

Along with government employees and others working in the region, it is this extensive community for which the Community Hubs were conceived. (Engagement with the Ngarrindjeri is specifically lead by the CLLMM Program. However, this work is also supported by the Community Hubs.)

## 2 ASSESSMENT OF OUTCOMES & OBJECTIVES

When the first Community Hub was established in 2009, high-level objectives, a number of high-level project outcomes and more-detailed Hubs-specific outcomes were developed and included in the funding contract with the Milang and Districts Community Association. These objectives were then reviewed and modified for stage 2 of the project in 2010-2011. The extent to which each of the outcomes has been met during both stages of the project is addressed in the following sections of the performance review.

### 2.1 High level objectives

The two stages of the Community Hubs which are being reviewed by this report are stage 1 (2009-10) and stage 2 (2010-11).

The combined key objectives for the two stages of the Community Hubs were:

- Facilitate community-based involvement in the Lower Lakes
  - To engage in decisions
  - To involve in actions
  - To undertake research
  - To support adaptation
- Establish the Community Hub at Milang – a project information centre for dissemination of project information to the community (stage 1)
- Continue, and build on, services and initiatives established through stage 1
- Establish the "Community Hub" at Meningie – a project information centre for dissemination of project information to the community (stage 2)
- Engage and support community nurseries
- Facilitate engagement and co-ordination of community nurseries
- Provide community education and training opportunities related to the Bioremediation and Revegetation Project.

The extent to which these objectives have been met is assessed against the expected project outcomes in the following section.

### 2.2 Overview of expected outcomes

During the process of designing and developing the Community Hubs and drafting the contracts, a large number of outcomes were documented, including both broader outcomes for stages 1 and 2, and more-detailed 'Community Hubs specific' outcomes. Where there is direct duplication with the outcomes of stages 1 or 2, one has been removed. However, there remain a total of 21 overall project outcomes, and 22 Hubs-specific outcomes.

## 2.2.1 Project outcomes

The following table provides a list of all of the higher-level Community Hubs outcomes (as defined in contracts) and provides a quick reference to the extent these outcomes have been met.

More detail about the way all of these outcomes have been addressed is provided in section 2.3.

**Table 2.1: Addressing Expected Outcomes of Community Hubs**

No.	Outcome	Year	Done?
1	The establishment of a trusted, inclusive focal point in the community (the Community Hubs), which provides comprehensive information and supports community engagement in the planning, science, on ground works and learnings of the Lower Lakes Bioremediation Project.	2009-10	Y
2	The establishment of a project management committee to provide community drive and ownership of the project.	2009-10	Y
3	Location for Lower Lakes Bioremediation project team interface with community activities and project management activities.	2009-10	Y
4	A more informed, aware and educated community at the local, regional and state level, to increase understanding and engagement in the Lower Lakes Bioremediation Project.	2009-10	Y
5	Promote the Hubs across the Coorong and Lower Lakes region.	2010-11	Y
6	Develop a comprehensive Community Engagement Strategy to involve local communities in supporting the CLLMM program.	2010-11	P
7	Provide effective two way flow of information and feedback between community and DENR CLLMM Program Team.	2010-11	Y
8	Maintain effective networks with all stakeholders and develop partnerships at regional, sub-regional and cross regional levels.	2010-11	Y
9	Community actively involved in planning processes, science and on ground works.	2010-11	Y
10	Maintain effective management of the Milang Hub that enables community drive and ownership of the project.	2010-11	Y
11	Establish trust and engagement with the Meningie community through the Meningie Community Hubs.	2010-11	Y
12	Disseminate information to the community on all aspects of the CLLMM Program.	2010-11	Y
13	Adopt Adaptive Management principles and strategies for environmental programs, people, communities, businesses building capacity to respond to change.	2010-11	Y
14	Improve communication and understanding between CLLMM Program Managers and local stakeholders.	2010-11	Y
15	Collect qualitative and quantitative data for on-ground works, biophysical change and community engagement.	2009-11	Y
16	Facilitate best practice within community engagement and adaptive management.	2010-11	Y
17	Co-ordinate growing and distribution of plant stock for the Vegetation Project with DENR and other delivery partners.	2010-11	Y
18	Share learning with broader community through reporting successes and	2010-11	Y

No.	Outcome	Year	Done?
	failures.		
19	Support landholders, Landcare and catchment group activities and encourage community contributions to the CLLMM Program.	2010-11	Y
20	Promote cross cultural awareness.	2010-11	Y
21	Assist other Government Agencies involved in the project with dissemination of information including liaison and contact with landholders, community groups and other organisations.	2010-11	Y

Y = Yes – completed successfully

P = Part – partly achieved – has contributed to achieving outcome as required

## 2.2.2 Hubs-specific outcomes

The Hubs-specific outcomes contribute to the achievement of the overall Community Hubs outcomes. The following table provides a list of all of these outcomes (as defined in contracts) and provides a quick reference to the extent these outcomes have been met. The way in which these Hubs-specific outcomes are interrelated with the Community Hubs outcomes is also described in section 2.3.

**Table 2.2: Hubs-Specific Outcomes**

No.	Outcome	Year	Done?
H1	Employ Hubs Coordinator (1FTE for the term of the project).	2009-10	Y
H2	Establish display / contact points at various sites in the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth region, including the Coorong District Council's Meningie office.	2009-10	P
H3	Disseminate Lower Lakes Bioremediation Project information to the wider community.	2009-10	Y*
H4	Provide a flow of information to government from the community – vital for adaptive management of the Lower Lakes Bioremediation Project.	2009-10	Y*
H5	Represent a meaningful commitment by the State Government to keep the broader community informed and engaged in the Lower Lakes Bioremediation Project in a timely, effective and community-endorsed manner.	2009-11	Y*
H6	Enable community access to relevant information and project data that has been collected through previous projects run by both community and government (eg wetland monitoring data, Lower Lakes and Coorong Oral History research).	2009-11	Y*
H7	Integrate the promotion of the range of projects and programs being run throughout the Lakes districts and provide links across all project components.	2009-11	Y*
H8	Pull together a wide range of existing community resources and programs that currently exist in the Lakes district to value add to the CLLMM programs.	2009-11	Y*
H9	Develop a Communication Strategy.	2009-10	P
H10	Provide community education and awareness programs including field days and presentations.	2009-11	Y*
H11	Provide up to date information, fact sheets and educative tools to assist the community in effectively working to meet the objectives of the CLLMM Program.	2009-11	Y*
H12	Ensure sufficient space and resources are available in the Community Hubs	2009-11	Y*



No.	Outcome	Year	Done?
	for project staff and visiting DEH staff.		
H13	Provide support, resources and information to project volunteers.	2009-11	Y*
H14	Encourage involvement of volunteer organisations and individuals through CLLMM Program.	2009-11	Y*
H15	Maintain the Milang Regional Co-ordinator (1FTE Milang for the term of the project) to maintain and continue to grow the services available at both Community Hubs.	2010-11	Y
H16	Employ a trainee Administration Assistant (1FTE) to provide support to the Community Hubs staff.	2010-11	Y
H17	Employ a Community Education & Training Officer (0.4FTE).	2010-11	N
H18	Establish Community Hubs Meningie office to provide information, education, support and involvement for the Lake Albert Communities employing a Meningie Hub Officer (.8FTE)	2010-11	Y*
H19	Disseminate CLLMM Program information to the wider community.	2010-11	Y*
H20	Provide a base for other future community engagement activities i.e., training	2010-11	Y*
H21	Provide a flow of information to government from the community – vital for Adaptive Management of the CLLMM Program.	2010-11	Y*
H22	Develop a Community and Engagement Strategy and provide a copy of the Strategy to DENR.	2010-11	P

Y = Yes – completed successfully

Y\* = Yes – completed and additional information supplied in following section

P = Part – contributed to achieving outcome as required

N = Not met

## 2.3 Assessing the outcomes

The following section provides evidence and information about the extent to which the outcomes have been achieved.

### ***Outcome 1 The establishment of a trusted, inclusive focal point in the community (the Community Hubs), which provides comprehensive information and supports community engagement in the planning, science, on ground works and learnings of the Lower Lakes Bioremediation Project.***

Using a variety of approaches, the Community Hubs appear to have become a trusted, inclusive focal point in the community. They use their weekly bulletin to engage community, keep up-to-date fact sheets and information, and run events including the science-focused Talking Heads sessions. The Hubs also provide office space for the Goolwa to Wellington LAP which coordinates the monitoring and planting projects, and in addition they help to coordinate community planting days. All of these elements contribute to a place from which the community can get information they trust and find out how they can become involved in the Bioremediation and Revegetation Project and the CLLMM Program.

**Outcome 2 *The establishment of a project management committee to provide community drive and ownership of the project.***

This outcome has been achieved through the establishment and ongoing management of the 'Lakes Hubs Advisory Committee' (LHAC). Key sections of the LHAC Terms of Reference are provided below to summarise how the committee has been operating.

**Purpose**

- To provide guidance and support to the Community Hubs Coordinator
- To provide strategic direction for the Community Hubs
- To provide community drive and ownership of the project
- To enable an appropriate mechanism to effectively track progress of the project milestones and outcomes
- To manage risk appropriately.

**Operation**

- The Committee will meet on a monthly basis for the duration of the project.
- Meetings will be guided by an agenda with supporting papers where appropriate
- Minutes will be taken and ratified for all meetings
- Meetings will be Chaired by the Milang & District Community Association Chairperson
- Meetings will be consistent with the Milang & District Community Association Inc By Law #2.

**Membership**

- Local Action Planning Groups ( LAPs)
- Department of Environment and Natural Resources
- Milang and District Community Association Inc.
- Meningie Progress Association
- Alexandrina Council
- Coorong District Council
- SA Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resource Management Board (MDBNRM Board)
- Local community
- Other invited representatives as appropriate.

**Reporting relationship****The Committee will report to:-**

- The Milang and District Community Association Inc.
- Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

So far, LHAC meetings have been held in 2010 on 31 March, 28 April, 26 May, 23 June, 21 July, 25 August, 23 September, 20 October, and 18 November 2010; and in 2011 on 1 February, 12 April, and 9 May.

A summary of the key outcomes and discussions of each meeting is recorded in their minutes.

**Outcome 3 Location for Lower Lakes Bioremediation Project team interface with community activities and project management activities.**

Both the Meningie and Milang Community Hubs are in central locations within the CLLMM region. The Hubs are reasonably accessible, allowing interface between the community activities and project management activities. The Hubs also provide a base from which meetings can be held in the CLLMM region, allowing CLLMM staff to talk to people first-hand and investigate sites and issues which arise.

The number of people visiting the site has varied greatly over different periods. In the most recent quarter (January to March 2011), 374 people visited the Milang Hub and 209 visited the Meningie Hub, a total of 583 visitors. The majority of visitors were from the local area (72%), with 23% from elsewhere in the state, 4% from interstate, and 2% being international visitors. 36% of the people visiting the Hubs were there for educational reasons, and 18% for meetings. The rest had individual queries or interests.

However, beyond the numbers of those that visit the actual Hub shop-fronts, there are also many hundreds who become involved with the Community Hubs through the various outreach activities. The Hubs are not only a place where people congregate, but are also a place from which people can go into the community and region. Hubs staff and volunteers visit local shows, provide training, attend various meetings and are involved in on-ground works.



**Wendy White (past Lakes Hub Coordinator), Terry Sim (Lower Lakes and Coorong Fencing Co-ordinator, Goolwa to Wellington LAP), Mike Linscott (President, Milang Progress Association), Karyn Bradford (Coordinator of the Milang Old School House Community Centre), Carole Richardson (Lower Lakes and Coorong Projects Manager, Goolwa to Wellington LAP) and Jo McPhee (Community Nursery Coordinator) at the Milang Lakes Hub launch in December 2009**

**Outcome 4 A more informed, aware and educated community at the local, regional and state level, to increase understanding and engagement in the CLLMM Program.**

The Community Hubs make information readily available to local, regional and state levels. Key stakeholders include local residents, council and other government bodies. This allows a direct point of contact which in turn saves CLLMM Program staff from having to be in the region more often to deal with questions and issues. Community Hubs staff can communicate on behalf of the CLLMM Program which allows a more in depth and far reaching engagement of the community.

**Outcome 5 Promote the Hubs across the Coorong and Lower Lakes Region**

The Hubs use their weekly bulletin, emailed to their contacts database of over 250 people, to help promote CLLMM activities and disseminate information across the CLLMM region. These bulletins are also distributed to other local industry and community networks via key contacts in their email database.

The Lakes Hubs have developed a website, [www.lakeshub.com](http://www.lakeshub.com). The site promotes the activities and services provided by the Lakes Hubs, focussing on keeping people across the region informed.

Staff and volunteers regularly attend regional shows and events, promoting the Lakes Hubs not only at the events, but also through posters and other materials developed to promote their attendance at the events.

They also use local media and their extensive local networks to promote the Lakes Hubs to local people.

Promotion of the Lakes Hubs is also supported by the CLLMM Program Communications and Community Engagement team. Activities, events and services provided by the Lakes Hubs are promoted through the CLLMM Program community email update and also through promotional materials such as fact sheets and posters, where appropriate.



**Lou Mawson (Lakes Hub Coordinator) helping with Strathalbyn regional show, 2010**



**Lou Mawson (Lakes Hub Coordinator) talking to Chinese delegates at the Milang Lakes Hub, December 2010**

***Outcome 6 Develop a comprehensive Community Engagement Strategy to involve local communities in supporting the CLLMM Program;***

The Community Hubs have developed a draft community engagement strategy (CES) which is currently being reviewed by DENR. As part of the process for developing the CES, principles and values have been drafted and approved in principal by DENR and Hubs staff, and the way in which the Community Hubs will engage with their community has also been well described. However, more detail needs to be added on how the Hubs plan to involve local communities in environmental projects in the region. CLLMM staff are working with the Hubs staff and Milang and Districts Community Association to finalise the community engagement strategy.

***Outcome 7 Provide effective two-way flow of information and feedback between community and DENR CLLMM Program Team***

This outcome has been achieved. Members of the CLLMM Program team are in daily contact with Community Hubs staff. Issues/topics raised during these interactions include

- Contract management
- Community engagement events
- Water quality
- Acid sulfate soils
- Vegetation/on-ground works
- Reporting and information dissemination
- Approvals for documents and emails
- Visitor management and enquiries
- Endangered species
- Community Hubs Steering Committee meetings
- Program information sharing
- Community Hubs weekly Bulletin.

Both the Community Hubs Coordinator and the Meningie Hub Officer provide the CLLMM Program Team with a regular email report every Friday that includes achievements, outcomes, issues and the outlook for the next week. Any issues which relate to changing conditions and the management of the site are shared with relevant CLLMM team members.



**Shop-front of Milang Lakes Hub**



**Gemma Cunningham (DENR) and Wendy White  
(past Lakes Hub Coordinator) 2009**

Meeting this objective contributes to the following Community Hubs specific outcomes (outcome 43):

- The Community Hubs provides a flow of information to the CLLMM Program Team from the community which is vital for Adaptive Management of the CLLMM Program.

**Outcome 8 Maintain effective networks with all stakeholders and develop partnerships at regional, sub-regional and cross regional levels**

The Community Hubs have achieved this outcome by:

- maintaining a database of over 250 members of the local community, government, media and NGOs, who receive weekly email bulletins from the Hubs and community updates from DENR and other organisations such as the Goolwa to Wellington LAP. The Lakes Hub Bulletins contain information about what is happening in the region, especially related to community involvement in government projects;
- working closely with the Goolwa to Wellington LAP Association and providing office space for Project Officers working on the CLLMM Program (including bioremediation, revegetation, fencing and monitoring);
- working closely with the Coorong Tatiara LAP Association and providing office space for Project Officers working on the CLLMM fencing, vegetation and monitoring programs;
- working closely with iCare Communities which work to involve urban and rural volunteers in community projects including the 2011 CLLMM Vegetation Program;
- working closely with local governments including Alexandrina Council, Rural City of Murray Bridge and Coorong Districts Council, and having members of each on the Lakes Hubs Steering Committee;
- working closely with regional schools including the Eastern Fleurieu School – Milang Campus and the Meningie Area School to develop effective school and youth



engagement and awareness of CLLMM projects and enhance participation in current programs implemented within their regions;

- maintaining strong networks with the local fishing, beef and dairy industry with key industry leaders regularly in contact with Community Hubs staff;
- maintaining good local networks by using staff from the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth region;
- coordinating or contributing to soil and water monitoring in the region, results from which are used by CSIRO;
- supporting the Meningie Lakefront Habitat Restoration Project. The Meningie Hub coordinator has helped to form the Friends of Meningie group to lead community involvement in the project. He coordinates the group using his well-established local networks;
- supporting the development of the community nurseries network, enabling them to grow many of the plants needed for the Lower Lakes Bioremediation and Revegetation Program.

Meeting this objective has also contributed to the following Community Hubs specific outcomes:

- Disseminate CLLMM Program information to the wider community
- Provide a base for other future community engagement activities ie training
- Provide a flow of information to government from the community – vital for adaptive management of the CLLMM Program
- Represent a meaningful commitment by the State Government to keep the broader community informed and engaged in the CLLMM Program in a timely, effective and community-endorsed manner
- Enable community access to relevant information and project data that has been collected through previous projects run by both community and government
- Integrate the promotion of the range of projects and programs being run throughout the Lakes districts and provide links across all project components
- Pull together a wide range of existing community resources and programs that currently exist in the Lakes district to value add to CLLMM Program.

### ***Outcome 9 Community actively involved in planning processes, science and on-ground works***

The Community Hubs have facilitated the community to become more actively involved in planning, science and on-ground works through a number of activities, including the following:

- Quarterly catch ups between CLLMM ecological monitoring team members and Hubs staff have occurred on 20 January and 7 April, with the next scheduled for 21 July. Discussion of



monitoring activities both planned and underway has led to a productive exchange of ideas and information;

- On-ground monitoring staff regularly "drop in" to Hubs on field trips to touch base with what is happening;
- Hub staff assisting in development and roll out of online information tool "COMMIT" to spatially capture community monitoring currently occurring in region;
- Volunteer opportunities advertised and filled to assist with Southern Bell Frog monitoring (coordinated by Kate Mason of SAMDB NRM Board);
- Community revegetation monitoring where CLLMM monitoring staff worked with Hub staff to develop, test and roll out photo point and survivorship monitoring.



**Carole Richardson (Lower Lakes and Coorong Projects Manager, Goolwa to Wellington LAP) explaining acid sulfate soil monitoring to students, May 2011**



**Carole and Regina (Goolwa to Wellington LAP staff based at Milang Lakes Hub) showing Meningie Area School students how to monitor acid sulfate soils, June 2010**

Meeting this objective has also contributed to the following Community Hubs specific outcomes:

- Represent a meaningful commitment by the State Government to keep the broader community informed and engaged in the CLLMM Program in a timely, effective and community-endorsed manner;
- Enable community access to relevant information and project data that has been collected through previous projects run by both community and government;
- Provide up to date information, fact sheets and educative tools to assist the community in effectively working to meet the objectives of the CLLMM Program.

**Outcome 10 Maintain effective management of the Milang Hubs that enables community drive and ownership of the project**

The achievement of this outcome is demonstrated by the Community Hubs:

- steadily becoming an increasingly significant part of the community
- facilitating monitoring and planting which have increased community drive and ownership of the project as evidenced by high participation levels
- participating in and contributing to increasing numbers of community events.

Meeting this objective contributes to the following Community Hubs specific outcomes:

- Employment and training of Community Hubs staff to ensure that the services at the Hubs are maintained and continue to grow, this means that community drive can continue to be encouraged.

### **Outcome 11 Establish trust and engagement with the Meningie community through the Meningie Community Hubs**

The Meningie Lakes Hub has achieved increased trust and engagement with the Meningie Community by:

- developing direct relationships with the Meningie community;
- providing a point of contact with which the community can raise their concerns and receive a prompt reply. Examples of this have been seen in relation to the Meningie Lakefront Habitat Restoration Project, planting, fencing and weed control projects;
- establishing the Friends of Meningie which is helping to engage the community and thereby generating trust; and
- engaging with the local school and local community groups.



**Andrew Dawes (Lakes Hub – Info. & Admin. Officer Meningie) chairing the Friends of Meningie meeting, May 2011**



**Andrew Dawes (Lakes Hub – Info. & Admin. Officer Meningie) at a School and Youth engagement meeting at Meningie Area school, March 2011**

Meeting this objective contributes to the following Community Hubs specific outcomes:

- Establishing the Meningie Community Hubs to provide information, education, support and involvement in the Lake Albert Community.

### ***Outcome 12 Disseminate information to the community on all aspects of the CLLMM Program***

The Community Hubs have been disseminating a wide range of information about the CLLMM Program to local communities. Specific activities are summarised below.

- The Hubs issue a weekly bulletin which updates members of the community on projects happening in the region, topics of interest and events. This includes project updates and opportunities for the community to get involved in CLLMM projects.
- The Hubs organise regular "Talking Heads" information sessions focusing on the different projects within the CLLMM Program.
- The Hubs have all of the fact sheets and information that CLLMM produce and these are available to the community in both Hubs.
- The Hubs employ local people who have a natural advantage when it comes to being able to network locally and talk to the community about the projects within the CLLMM Program.
- Lakes Hubs staff attend regional shows and local events and disseminate information about the CLLMM Program activities at the events.
- The Lakes Hub website is used by the Hubs to disseminate information about the CLLMM Program, especially opportunities for local people to get involved and volunteer's successes through the program, but also project updates.
- Lakes Hubs staff are involved in a number of other local committees and working groups. They disseminate information about the CLLMM Program at regular meetings, which in turn is passed on through local industry and community networks.
- Through effectively promoting the Lakes Hubs, local community members actively approach the Hubs for information about the CLLMM Program. Through keeping the Hubs' staff up to date on CLLMM projects, they are able to disseminate information directly to the public.

Meeting this objective contributes to the following Community Hubs specific outcomes:

- Disseminate CLLMM Program information to the wider community and providing community education and awareness programs including field days and presentations.

***Outcome 13 Adopt Adaptive Management principles and strategies for environmental programs, people, communities, businesses building capacity to respond to change***

The Community Hubs have been working with local communities to respond to change in a number of ways.

Through links with the Milang and Districts Community Association, the Lakes Hubs offered support to local people at the height of the drought by advising them of counselling and other services available to help cope with the devastating impacts of drought.

With the recent return of the water, the Hubs have helped facilitate the changes required to adapt to the new conditions. These included educating volunteers on new monitoring techniques in the context of changed conditions. They have also provided information to the local community on how projects have been adapted to new conditions.

The Hubs have also co-ordinated community monitoring for soil and water quality and the results have been used by CSIRO and the CLLMM Program to determine the most appropriate actions to address environmental issues as part of the adaptive management response.

Meeting this objective contributes to the following Community Hubs specific outcomes:

- The Community Hubs provides a flow of information to the CLLMM Program Team from the community which is vital for Adaptive Management of the CLLMM Program

***Outcome 14 Improve communication and understanding between CLLMM Project Managers and local stakeholders***

The Community Hubs have played an important role in improving communication and understanding between CLLMM Project Managers and local stakeholders at a number of levels. This has been achieved because:

- The Community Hubs provide a local interface for dissemination of information about CLLMM projects and on-ground works input and feedback from experienced locals enables adaptive management of project works to ensure maximum value from knowledge of previous environmental events and local specific issues;
- The Hub offices are a drop in point for locals exchanging information which is assessed by Hub staff and forwarded to the relevant CLLMM manager. Such issues as the rising water levels in recent months and hazards in the Lakes have been handled better because of Hub facilitation;
- The Hubs have also been effective in improving communication between local stakeholders and other government agencies working in the CLLMM region;
- The Hubs provide a central point from which government officers can work in the region and meet with the local community.

**Outcome 15 Collect qualitative and quantitative data for on-ground works, biophysical change and community engagement**

Since August 2009, 100 Lower Lakes community volunteers have been involved in an acid sulfate soils monitoring program which is coordinated by the Goolwa-Wellington Local Action Planning Association and CSIRO, and partly facilitated through the Hubs. This monitoring is undertaken quarterly at up to 50 sites in Lakes Albert and Alexandrina, Goolwa Channel and the lower reaches of the Finniss River and Currency Creek to assess changes in acid sulfate soil chemistry and morphology over time at set locations.

The Community Hubs facilitated monitoring and evaluation in which data was collected and presented to inform Government, contribute to decision-making and enable assessment of future proposals that support adaptive management of the CLLMM Program. In so doing, the Community Hubs worked with CLLMM staff to integrate monitoring and evaluation activities to achieve CLLMM Program outcomes.

Meeting this objective contributes to the following Community Hubs specific outcomes:

- Provide support, resources and information to project volunteers.
- Encourage involvement of volunteer organisations and individuals through CLLMM Program.

**Outcome 16 Facilitate best practice within community engagement and adaptive management**

The Community Hubs provide local public meeting places, and are both repositories and distribution points for local information and CLLMM information. In order to engage with the community well, staff members of the Community Hub are members of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), an organisation which defines best practise in community engagement. The Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation are defined as follows:

- 1 Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
- 2 Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
- 3 Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
- 4 Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
- 5 Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
- 6 Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
- 7 Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

Hubs staff also maintain regular contact with other regional groups involved in community engagement. In addition, members of the CLLMM Team also have high level national and international experience in community engagement and guide and support Hub staff networking and practices.

In the case of facilitate best practice with adaptive management, Hub staff work closely with members of the CLLMM team to share information about managing a changing environment. This is also discussed further under outcome 13.

***Outcome 17 Co-ordinate growing and distribution of plant stock for the Vegetation Project with DENR and other delivery partners***

The Community Nurseries Coordinator is employed through the Milang and Districts Community Association and located at the Lakes Hub. This role has coordinated growing and distribution of plant stock for the Vegetation project with DENR and other delivery partner. This role specifically relates to the Bioremediation and Revegetation Project and is outside the scope of this review of the Lakes Hubs' performance.

***Outcome 18 Sharing learning with broader community through reporting successes and failures***

The Hubs share their learnings through the Community Hubs Weekly Update and Talking Heads events. Both of these avenues allow the broader community to hear about outcomes of projects and what did and did not work.

***Outcome 19 Support landholders, landcare and catchment group activities and encourage community contribution to the CLLMM Program***

The Hubs support landholders, landcare and catchment groups through providing up to date information and helping organise activities. They help particularly with the facilitation of community participation around revegetation and monitoring.

Meeting this objective contributes to the following Community Hubs specific outcomes:

- Provide support, resources and information to project volunteers.
- Encourage involvement of volunteer organisations and individuals through CLLMM Program.

***Outcome 20 Promote cultural awareness***

The Community Hubs have contributed to the promotion of cultural awareness by:

- organising events such as an educational fieldtrip day for World Wetlands Day which visited the Ngarrindjeri area at Raukkan and helped educate the broader community about Ngarrindjeri culture and involvement in the area.
- through its weekly bulletin, especially the recent edition focusing on reconciliation week and featuring a number of articles on Ngarrindjeri culture.

Meeting this objective contributes to the following Community Hubs specific outcomes:

- Provide up to date information, fact sheets and educative tools to assist the community in effectively working to meet the objectives of the CLLMM Program.

***Outcome 21 Assist other Government Agencies involved in the project with dissemination of information including liaison and contact with landholders, community groups and other organisations***

The Community Hubs disseminates information for the following agencies through their email network and Hub Bulletin as well as providing office space for officers/managers of such agencies whilst working in the region when required:

- PIRSA
- Rural Solutions
- EPA
- SARDI
- SA Water
- SA MDB NRM
- DENR

The Community Hubs assists the above agencies with landholder and community group liaison. As one of many examples, during the CLLMM Vegetation Aerial Seeding, Hub staff personally contacted landholders by phone to notify them of up and coming seeding events.

They also coordinate monthly 'Talking Heads' events whereby the above agencies are provided an opportunity to present to the community and other organisations on their current projects or topics relevant to the CLLMM region.

Meeting this objective contributes to the following Community Hubs specific outcomes:

- Represent a meaningful commitment by the State Government to keep the broader community informed and engaged in the CLLMM Program in a timely, effective and community-endorsed manner.
- Enable community access to relevant information and project data that has been collected through previous projects run by both community and government.



- Provide up to date information, fact sheets and educative tools to assist the community in effectively working to meet the objectives of the CLLMM Program.
- Ensure sufficient space and resources are available in the Community Hubs for project staff and visiting DENR staff.

## 2.4 Contribution to Objectives of Bioremediation Project

By achieving the outcomes as outlined in the section above, the Community Hubs have made an important contribution to achieving a number of key objectives defined in the Commonwealth funding deed for the 'Bioremediation and Revegetation at South Australia's Lower Lakes' project.

The primary objectives listed assessed below are from the Commonwealth funding deed for the Bioremediation project (A.9).

**Table 2.2 Bioremediation Project Objectives met by Community Hubs**

Objective	Project's contribution to Objectives over proposed funding period
Provide ecosystem stability and resilience	This project has seen the facilitation of greater community involvement in the project and timely information dissemination and project promotion to the Lakes Alexandrina and Lakes Albert Communities through the establishment and ongoing support of community nurseries and the Community Hubs at Milang and Meningie. The Hubs have provided community members with rapid access to project information and a location where they can source up-to-date project information, seek environmental management advice from project officers housed at the Hubs, and receive information on all aspects of funding being delivered through the project. This, in conjunction with the establishment and support of community nurseries, has seen an increase in local level community engagement in the project and has facilitated community participation and ownership in the project deliverables, thereby creating a social climate where ongoing project input and a desire for a common positive project outcomes within local communities is realised.
Stabilise sand/soil/dust movement  & Assist management of acidification	The establishment and ongoing support of Community Nurseries has facilitated a greater degree of local community involvement in the propagation of native plants required for the project, and participation in planting activities, which has in turn provide greater local-level resource sharing across the Lower Lakes Bioremediation Project. Local knowledge has been more readily available to assist with operational aspects of the project, specifically around implementation, and increased facilitation of local level participation has seen significant economic benefits delivered to the communities of Lakes Alexandrina and Albert.
Improve biodiversity in treated areas	Community knowledge is being utilised through the implementation of this project to assist in undertaking best practice methodology for works on and around Lakes Alexandrina and Albert. This knowledge has been built from many years of collective experience in undertaking revegetation and environmental restoration works in the local area. This Project has ensured that range of information is brought together and used in the effective delivery of plant propagation and revegetation activities as required by the Lower Lakes Bioremediation Project and the CLLMM program.

## 3 ANALYSIS AND PLANNING

### 3.1 Analysis of outcomes

When analysing what has been achieved by the Community Hubs, and in particular, when considering the overall expected project outcomes, it is clear that the intent of all high-level project outcomes has been achieved, 20 in full and one in part. This is an excellent record given that there is a total of 21 outcomes to be achieved over the two stages of the project (2009-10 and 2010-11).

In the case of some outcomes, evidence suggests that the project has performed well above expectations. Although one high-level outcome has not been fully met by the project, and one of the Hub-specific outcomes has also not been met, in the context of all that has been achieved, the net balance is an overall high benefit, far beyond that which would be expected within the budget and timeframe of the project. The project was mobilised very quickly, and despite involving large numbers of people, many of whom were inexperienced, resulted in quick and effective delivery of a complex range of services.

In essence, both the objectives and the outcomes of the project have been achieved, and to a relatively-high degree. However, some issues have emerged, and these will be discussed further in the following section.

### 3.2 Issues, Gaps and proposed Improvements

During this review of the outcomes, achievements and challenges of the Community Hubs, a number of issues or gaps have been identified. These include the following:

- Managing the relationship between Hubs and DENR
- Approvals, branding and media protocols
- Completing a community engagement strategy
- Increasing detail of weekly report
- Development of cross-regional partnerships
- Employment of a Community Education and Training Officer
- Establishing display/contact points at other sites in the CLLMM region
- Greater acknowledgement of community volunteers.

More details about these issues and what has been or is being done to address them is provided below.

### **3.2.1 Managing the relationship between Hubs and DENR**

There are still some issues regarding the relationship between 'the community' and city-based 'government' between the Community Hubs and the CLLMM Program. The CLLMM team, the Community Hubs staff and the Milang and Districts Community Association will be working closely together to improve relationships between the organisations in the future.

Issues regarding a feeling of imbalance in the partnership between the Milang and Districts Community Association/Community Hubs and CLLMM have also been raised. The CLLMM team will work closely with the Milang and Districts Community Association and Community Hubs staff to address these issues. This will be done through face-to-face meetings to ensure there are no misunderstandings and there can be an open, equal conversation. By working through improved communications and media protocols, some of these issues may also be addressed.

### **3.2.2 Approvals, branding and media protocols**

There have been some issues relating to processes and standards of outputs provided by the Community Hubs. This has included branding of materials, ensuring government funding and support is acknowledged, adopting appropriate media protocols and obtaining necessary approvals for materials produced by the Community Hubs. These issues have been discussed in face-to-face meetings, and communications and media protocols have been drafted, agreed and implemented by DENR and the Community Hubs. These protocols have been in place for over four months. There are still some areas of confusion which have been identified and updated protocols have been tabled at the Bioremediation and Revegetation Project Committee meeting, which will be discussed further before being finalised.

### **3.2.3 Completing a community engagement strategy**

The Community Hubs have developed a draft Community Engagement Strategy which has been received by the CLLMM Program. It includes good work on their principles and values in the way that the Community Hubs will engage with their community, but needs more detail in how they plan to involve local communities in environmental projects in the region. The CLLMM program team are working together with the Hubs staff and Milang and Districts Community Association to finalise the communications and community engagement strategies.

### **3.2.4 Detail of weekly reports**

Weekly reports are provided by the Community Hubs, but the detail of what has been achieved each week could be improved. It is recommended that statistics of how many people made contact with the Community Hubs and how many were unique or repeat visits each week and what information/services they required are collected by the Community Hubs to contribute to improving communications materials and community engagement activities to meet the needs of the local community.

### **3.2.5 Development of cross-regional partnerships**

The Community Hubs have developed good relationships at the local level and within their region. However, there may be opportunities to improve the number of partnerships developed across the regions.

### **3.2.6 Employment of a Community Education and Training Officer**

A Community Education and Training Officer (0.4 FTE) has not yet been employed. Although this was originally intended for the Hubs staff to carry out a number of community education and training activities, it was not deemed a priority to employ an additional person to manage these tasks. DENR have also contributed to educational activities. In the context of the work that has been undertaken through the Hubs in the past two years, it is no longer considered necessary to have a separate Community Education and Training Officer. Therefore, it is appropriate that this outcome has not been achieved.

### **3.2.7 Establishing display/contact points at other sites in the CLLMM region**

Displays or contact points have not yet been established by the Community Hubs at other sites in the CLLMM. A number of displays have been set up by the CLLMM team (eg at Goolwa Library). These displays could be maintained by the Community Hubs in the future and similar displays could be set up at other regional libraries and other appropriate locations (eg local supermarkets) by the Community Hubs.

### **3.2.8 Greater acknowledgement of community volunteers.**

The Milang and Districts Community Association/Lakes Hubs have raised concerns that the contribution of community volunteers is not adequately acknowledged by the CLLMM Program and that the volunteers they manage are part of the CLLMM program.

This was highlighted by the Milang and Districts Community Association, who manage the Lakes Hubs, indicating their feelings of ownership towards volunteers – they are registered to the community organisations and 'don't belong to CLLMM'.

This may affect delivery of the Community Hubs specific outcome to 'Encourage involvement of volunteer organisations and individuals through CLLMM Program', and other objectives relating to promoting the program in the future.

The CLLMM Program team intends to work closely with the Milang Districts and Community Association and Lakes Hubs staff to address this issue and provide greater acknowledgement to community volunteers.

This will be done through regular face-to-face meetings to identify opportunities for recognition, work out ways to better share achievements and successes of the volunteers, and through clarifying the roles of both the CLLMM Program and the Lakes Hubs in community engagement and encouraging community involvement in the program.

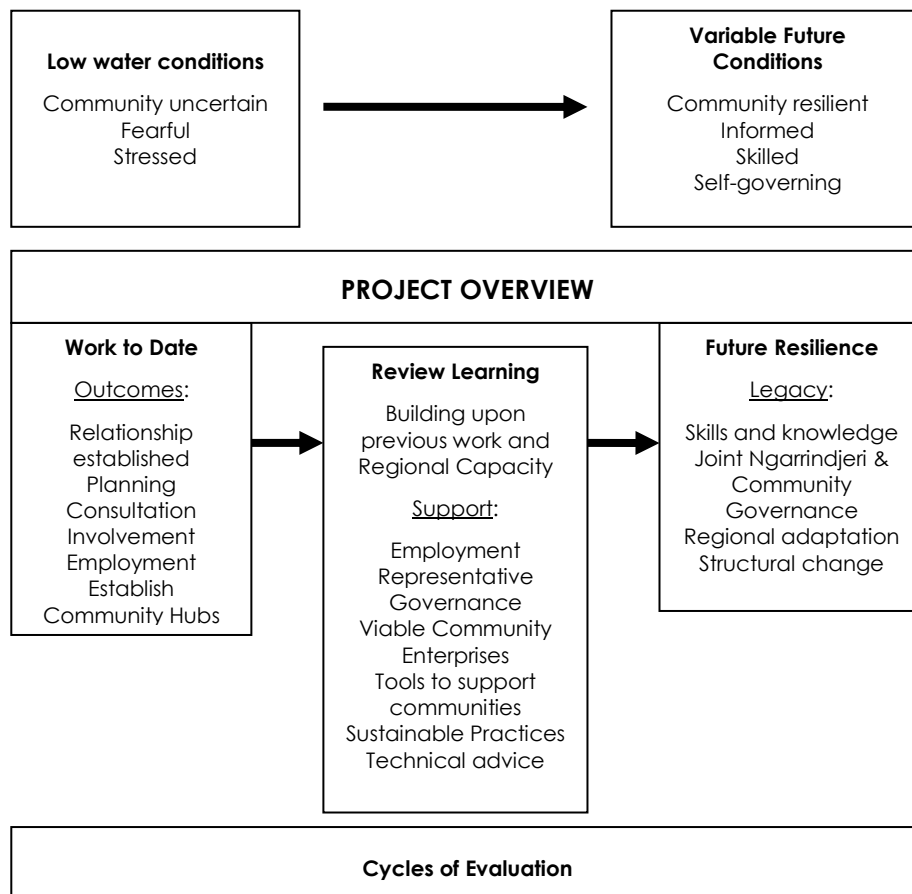
### 3.3 Future Plans for Community Engagement in the CLLMM Region

#### 3.3.1 A Resilient CLLMM Community

As shown in section 1.3.1 (Long-term vision and outcomes for the CLLMM Program), one of the key priorities of the CLLMM Program is to build a strong, resilient community in the CLLMM region. This resilience is based on the recognition (as outlined in the CLLMM long-term plan and business case) that both the Ngarrindjeri and broader communities need support to effectively engage in the long-term management of the site. All communities in the CLLMM region have social, cultural and economic ties to the region and have frequently confirmed their commitment, desire and expectation to be proactively involved in the long-term management of the site.

The following table illustrates the way in which Communication and Community Engagement activities have an important role to play in building a better future, regardless of conditions.

**Figure 1.2: Communications and Community Engagement Management Action Overview**



Major challenges for CLLMM communities will be:

- building capacity and support to manage the site once the CLLMM Project is complete
- revitalising and reinventing themselves to become more resilient over time
- whether they can capitalise on trends and technology
- adapting to climate change and limited water availability.

There are a number of ways that these challenges can be met. One of the key tools for effectively achieving CLLMM Program goals will be to establish a Community Advisory Panel to advise on draft CLLMM Program and Icon Site proposals, plans, and the implementation of the CLLMM Program and other relevant matters; and to promote and facilitate effective communications between the South Australian Government and local communities, industries and industry groups. Another key way to overcome these challenges is by maintaining and developing the Community Hubs to continue their effective role within the community.

### 3.3.2 Role of Community Hubs

The Community Hubs have provided and can continue to provide a focus and mechanism to help meet and overcome a range of challenges faced by governments and the community. So far, the Hubs have provided an effective interface where government can support the community to address the challenges of the future. This in turn contributes to the broader Communication and Community Engagement strategy which works with communities to ensure they will:

- be equipped to adapt to changing climatic conditions. They will know what to do, when and how do it to do it under difference environmental scenarios
- be informed and capable – if unfavourable conditions return, communities will know where to allocate investments, assign resources and focus their efforts
- have leaders to help focus efforts of partners and stakeholders, mobilise the input of others and garner the leadership and support of their community for multiple outcomes (environmental, social, cultural and economic)
- be well informed, aware and prepared for change that may affect the ecological health and character of the CLLMM site, and, at the same time, build resilience of the community over time
- have the ability to consolidate the range of existing community resources and programs that currently exist within the region (e.g. Caring for Our Country, regional health and family well-being programs, economic development as well as other social and community developments) in order to value-add to the CLLMM Program and the broader community over the long-term.

### 3.4 Conclusion

The first Community Hub was established at Milang in 2009 as part of the Lower Lakes Bioremediation and Revegetation Project, however, after 30 September 2011, it will be managed as a key component of the whole-of-CLLMM Communications and Community Engagement program. This reflects the fact that the Hubs are now working closely with more than one implementation project in the CLLMM region, and that they can be managed more effectively from a central point within CLLMM with a specific focus on Communication and Community Engagement. This is a sensible approach given the broad reach of Hub activities, and the close relationship between its goals and outputs and the strategic goals of the CLLMM Program as a whole.

From reviewing the outcomes, it is clear that the funding provided to establish and maintain the work of the Hubs has provided a raft of benefits. An analysis of the achievement of project outcomes has shown that 20 out of 21 outcomes have been met successfully, with several having been met to a standard higher than expected and with benefits greater than expected.

The performance review verifies clear net benefits from the project have been higher than anticipated. This review has also provided an opportunity to review those areas where outcomes have not been met as well, or where there are issues, and has suggested some recommended actions or changes to improve these issues.

The Community Hubs were established at a time of environmental and socio-economic crisis in the region, and as such, it is relatively easy to see what a positive and proactive role they have played in the implementation of the CLLMM Program and the improvement in government and community relations. The Community Hubs have helped the community to make sense of difficult conditions and to have some ownership of the complex operations needed to manage risks. Because the Hubs have been there through the hard times, it is important not to underestimate their importance now, as conditions improve.

The Community Hubs have built up considerable levels of trust and engagement with the local community which has had positive spin-offs for government. The Hubs have provided an effective mechanism for increasing community 'buy-in' to the CLLMM project and enabling the community to become more directly involved with management of their region.

The Community Hubs have been the catalyst for many improvements in communications, community engagement and program delivery, with the symbol of this project and this improved relationship being the two 'shop-fronts' in Milang and Meningie.

Now, as the focus of projects in the region is to increase resilience in both the environment and the community, the Community Hubs remain an important initiative. The Community Hubs are in a strong position to continue to support and add value to project implementation in the area. The funding which has been allocated to the project and the way in which it has been carried out so far can be seen to be an effective and strategic use of seed funding which has nurtured and grown a community-based organisation which is well-situated to continue to provide substantial benefits for the implementation of the CLLMM long-term plan. As such, the seed funding has provided good value for money. It is highly unlikely that the same benefits could be



achieved by a method which was not firmly-rooted in the community and did not provide a tangible presence in the community. Even if an alternative method were developed which provided similar benefits, it is hard to see that it could be a cheaper option.

### **3.4.1 Recommendations**

In view of the above, this review recommends that the Community Hubs continue along current lines, with funding and management through the CLLMM Program or equivalent. To improve future operations, it would be beneficial to review the large number of objectives and outcomes and develop objectives and outcomes which are measurable and 'SMART'. It is also recommended that the issues and gaps identified by this performance review are addressed in line with the suggestions in section 3.2 of this report.

Finally, it is recommended that the findings of this Performance Review are considered when developing requirements for the Hubs in the future.

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## APPENDIX A – MEDIA RELEASES FOR LAUNCH OF HUBS

Appendix A contains Ministerial Media releases relating to the launch of each Community Hub.

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### News Release

[www.premier.sa.gov.au](http://www.premier.sa.gov.au)



Hon Jay Weatherill

Minister for Environment &  
Conservation

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Friday, 4 December 2009

#### NEW CONTACT POINT FOR LOWER LAKES COMMUNITIES

A new information centre to keep local communities up to date with work being undertaken at the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth has been launched by the State Government today.

The Lakes Hub at Milang is an initiative of the Milang Progress Association, and is being funded through the Federal Government's \$10 million Lower Lakes Bioremediation and Revegetation Project, being administered by the State Government.

Environment and Conservation Minister Jay Weatherill, who officially launched the Lakes Hub today, said it would be a central information point for the region's communities.

"The Lakes Hub will provide information to the community about the bioremediation and revegetation project for the Lower Lakes," Mr Weatherill said.

"It also will co-ordinate the community nurseries program, through which local community nurseries are growing native plants for the revegetation project.

"The hub will provide local training opportunities as part our collaborative effort to ensure a sustainable future for the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth.

"Drought and overuse of water upstream has left large tracts of the Lakes exposed.

"While what the region needs most is our fair share of River Murray Water, we're continuing to do what we can to restore the Lower Lakes to health and the Lakes Hub will be a key part of our efforts."

The \$220,000 Lakes Hub and nurseries project are important investments in local jobs, with a Hub co-ordinator and Community Nurseries co-ordinator employed from the local community.

"Direct community involvement in recovery projects is a major focus of the Federal Government's \$10 million project, and the establishment of the Lakes Hub is a significant milestone," Mr Weatherill said. "The State Government sees The Hub as a base for future community engagement activities in the region, and as way of sharing information between government and the community."

President of the Milang Progress Association, Mike Linscott said he applauded the Government's initiative to involve the Lakes community not only in the establishment of The Hub, but also in developing the community nurseries.

"It shows the Government is continuing to support the community through very difficult times. We look forward to continuing support and development of the program," Mr Linscott said.

# News Release

[www.premier.sa.gov.au](http://www.premier.sa.gov.au)



**Hon Paul Caica**

Minister for Environment &  
Conservation  
Minister for the River Murray  
Minister for Water

Friday, 26 November 2010

## COMMUNITY HUB FOR MENINGIE

Meningie and communities around Lake Albert have a new point of contact for information about recovery work underway in the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth region.

Following the success of the Lakes Hub in Milang, a second community information hub has been established at Meningie as part of the Gillard Government's \$10 million Lower Lakes Bioremediation and Revegetation initiative.

Environment and Conservation Minister Paul Caica said the hub will be a central contact point for community members seeking more information about the projects underway in the region.

"The first Lakes Hub in Milang was launched last December and has been a popular drop-in centre for locals and tourists looking for information about the work that's being done to ensure the CLLMM region has a sustainable future," he said.

"The Milang Hub has also been at the forefront of organising community involvement in important planting and vegetation projects aimed at tackling serious issues such as acidification.

"A significant focus of recovery work in the CLLMM region is Lake Albert, so establishing a community information hub at Meningie has been a priority for the Federal and State Governments.

"And as the new hub's co-ordinator has been appointed from the local community, the establishment of this office is also an important investment for local jobs and the local economy."

The Meningie hub's Information and Administration Officer Andrew Dawes said it will operate along very similar lines to the Milang Hub.

"The Meningie office will provide the local community with access to a wide range of information about the recovery projects underway around Lake Albert, as well as providing advice and assistance for locals looking to become directly involved in some of those projects," he said.

"Meningie and Lake Albert communities have been hit hard in recent years by the impacts of drought and record low inflows, so having a direct point of contact for information is an important step in helping the community to recover."



Australian Government



Government  
of South Australia

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