



COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

2010 Wheatbelt NRM Sub-catchment Forums



wheatbelt
natural resource
management



CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY

149 members of the Wheatbelt community attended forums in Wongan Hills, Merredin and Hyden. 68 of those people chose to complete evaluation forms to help us learn a little more about our community so that we can improve our services in the future. Thank you to all those people who took the time to complete our survey - we really value your feedback, opinions and comments.

We've now crunched the numbers and have prepared a brief summary of the major findings. It is important to note that the findings in this summary reflect 45% of forum attendees (those people who completed the evaluation form). Wheatbelt NRM are in the process of reviewing all of the information gathered from the events, with a view to improving our future events.



At the Wongan Hills Forum - Dr Christine Jones, Soil Ecologist and The Honourable Mia Davies, Member for the Agricultural Region with Wyalkatchem farmers Dianne and Ian Haggerty, winners of the A&K Hill Green Agriculture Innovation Award for their soil friendly management practices.

WHERE DID PEOPLE COME FROM

Respondents came from many different places to attend the forums, including from the Shires of:

Bruce Rock	Kondinin
Cunderdin	Merredin
Dowerin	Mukinbudin
Dumbleyung	Narembeen
Goomalling	Quairading
Kellerberrin	Westonia
Kent	Wongan Ballidu
Kulin	Yilgarn

FORUM ATTENDANCE

149 people (excluding Wheatbelt NRM staff) attended the forums overall - 72 in Wongan Hills, 45 in Merredin and 32 in Hyden.

Of the 68 survey respondents the following people identified themselves:

- 35 as farmers (including 3 retired farmers)
- 9 who work in natural resource management
- 4 who work in Local Government
- 7 who work in State Government
- 3 who are consultants
- 2 from partner organisations
- 2 Nyungar community members
- 3 community members (who were not farmers)

PRESENTERS

Respondents rated the forum presenters as the highlight of the forums, both interstate and local presenters. Ernie Dingo also made a popular MC.

Each forum had a slightly different view of who the most inspiring and informative presenter was, and the top three presenters for each forum is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Most popular presenter for each forum location.

Location	Top Three Speakers	% of Respondents
Wongan Hills	Rowan Reid	26
	Christine Jones	19
	Ernie Dingo	16
Merredin	Christine Jones	30
	Rowan Reid	20
	Peter Cooke	20
Hyden	Christine Jones	28
	Sara Wilson and	21
	Rolf Meeking	21
	Rowan Reid	21

Survey respondents also made the following comments about the presenters:

- *Field Days by Christine Jones would be good.*
- *I would like to see more of Christine Jones.*
- *Rowan was excellent - true facts backed by experience.*
- *Great to have the soil problems explained.*
- *Excellent knowledge of speakers.*
- *Excellent MC - natural and humorous.*

In relation to presentations on Wheatbelt NRMs new governance and organisational structure, some respondents advised that the information was far too detailed for their needs, saying that it was "...too dry and detailed. Too governmental. Farmers don't need to know that stuff - its your problem".

They also advised that Wheatbelt NRM should not sound like politicians, as farmers do not

relate, and tend to "lose interest very quickly" and "switch off". A further comment was made that this approach in fact did "more harm than good".

We've heard you loud and clear, and will do our best to provide you with information that is relevant to your needs, and presented in a more relaxed format.

THE DAY IN GENERAL

70% of respondents indicated that the presenters were the highlight of the forums, with 10% indicating the booths, and 'other' aspects of the forum as useful and/or informative. "Other" aspects of the forum that respondents found useful and/or informative were:

- *the local presenters;*
- *the time for networking, particularly at the after forum bbq and drinks in Wongan Hills;*
- *to meet people working in natural resource management and what the future might hold;*



L-R: (Back row) Ernie Dingo, Forum MC, Dianne Lovell, Indigenous NRM Facilitator, Muriel Collard, Shirley Kickett, Kathleen Kickett. (Front row) Winnie McHenry, Yvonne Kickett, Boyd Kickett, Kevan Davis and Rosie Davis.

The crèche service was under subscribed with only three parents taking up the opportunity. One mum commented that the service had enabled her to attend and participate in the day, where normally she wouldn't be able to do so.

Overall, 69% of respondents rated the structure (venue, location and duration) as being 'good'. A similar percentage of respondents rated the forums in Merredin and Wongan Hills as being 'good', though in Hyden 82% gave a rating of 'good'.

65% of respondents indicated that the pace of the forums was right for them, and 73% indicated that the level of complexity of the topics was right for them.

GETTING YOUR MESSAGES ACROSS

On average, across all forums respondents indicated they were provided with the time and opportunity to express their views, and that these views were adequately addressed. However, it is clear that improvements can be made at future events. Table 2 shows the percentage of respondents who indicated they had the time and opportunity to express views, and that adequate attention was paid to issues raised.



Comments on this point included:

- *All areas were very interesting - perhaps covering an information session and gathering community views needs to be done separately*
- *More time for interaction /discussion*

Table 2: Percentage of respondents who indicated they had the time and opportunity to express views, and that adequate attention was paid to issues raised.

Location	Time & Opportunity to Express Views (% respondents)	Views were adequately addressed (% respondents)
Wongan Hills	74 (yes) 22 (partially) 4 (No)	74 (yes) 11 (partially) 15 (no response)
Merredin	62 (yes) 21 (partially) 13 (No) 4 (no response)	46 (yes) 17 (partially) 25 (no response) 12 (No)
Hyden	53 (yes) 35 (partially) 12 (no response)	59 (yes) 23 (partially) 12 (No) 6 (no response)

COMMUNITY COMMENTS ON NRM

Respondents made valuable additional comments and suggestions on issues and opinions important to them. These included:

Comments from Farmers

- *Lake Camm revegetation & drainage - need to prioritise or we will lose Wave Rock vegetation.*
- *We need help with getting ideas happening and off the ground.*
- *We need to protect some of our most precious bush areas (e.g. Lake Cronin, Graham Rock, Western Woodlands) from increasing tourism.*
- *Get back to basics of planting trees, cut the red tape for the individuals.*

- *I'm sick of Salmon Gums being felled. Advocate the environmental responsibility of land managers to leave large trees, contours, water courses in paddocks - not remove to suite auto steer!*
- *Foster more tree planting.*
- *Continuity of funding for projects e.g. Ecoscapes. Stop/start nature of funding makes community support difficult.*

Comments from NRM, State and Local Government and others involved in natural resource management:

- *Lots of talk to farmers - what about other people who aren't farmers but are passionate and interested in NRM?*
- *Good balance, great opportunity for community to participate in regional NRM.*
- *Can Wheatbelt NRM connect householders interested in the environment with each other and farmers who don't have time to do the work!*
- *Salinity is still a big issue to many farmers.*
- *As a Local Government, the NRM responsibility is being increased, which includes working with farmers, of which there is no formal group to work with.*

Other comments:

- *The local catchment group has lost momentum and disbanded despite many obvious needs.*
- *NRM talks about one voice, how to we know that our voice (Hyden) is going to be heard?*

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Respondents provided valuable suggestions for how Wheatbelt NRM can improve events in the future. These included:

Comments from Farmers:

- *We need local projects relating to landcare to be constructively discussed with the expertise within the room (govt. and landholders) with a view to accessing FUNDS.*

- *Where to? What next?*
- *Discuss salinity*
- *Want info talk on Lake Camm River Catchment*
- *Better advertising - local advertising e.g. local newspaper lacking. A morning or afternoon session, ie more cost effective without the meal. Overheads of the presentations would be helpful to take away if required.*
- *Field Days by Christine Jones would be good.*
- *How to improve soil at no cost.*
- *Try for exposure to farm productivity group pre and post seeding field days.*
- *Shorter - out of work time (8am - 5pm). Some interested community members work during the day and are unable to attend.*
- *An invitation extended to Farm Advisors.*
- *Less speakers, more open to questions, went too late*
- *More time for interaction / discussion.*

Comments from NRM, State and Local Government and others involved in natural resource management

- *All areas were very interesting - perhaps covering an information session and gathering community views needs to be done separately.*
- *What was the percentage of landholders to agency/service providers - landholder attendance needs to be improved.*
- *Have a clear aim for the event - Today's event seemed to jump around and be more about information on where WNRM is at rather than really obtaining community direction but this may be down to community or audience contribution.*
- *Local level - not just regionally based.*
- *Time of the day caused an energy draw down and affected attention.*
- *More practical discussion.*

- *When it comes to w/shop time - provide the info up front, then break into groups for discussion on suggested points. People feel intimidated speaking in a group of 50 - 70 people.*
- *The Forums are a great initiative but need to make them work so you achieve genuine community consultation.*
- *Can presentations be sent to attendees please.*

Other comments:

- *Have two forums, have results of these days summarised on the internet*
- *Great to have the soil problems explained*
- *Make the day more relevant to WNRM and it's future direction*

WHERE TO FROM HERE

All sectors of the community, from farmers, consultants, volunteers, state agencies, Local Government, householders and to those who work in the natural resource management environment have been heard. Wheatbelt NRM is committed to addressing the comments and suggestions when planning future programs and events wherever it is practical and possible to do so.

To assist with this, work is underway in seeking new sources of funding to enable Wheatbelt NRM to provide the resources necessary to

assist land managers and householders to carry out the work important in their Shire.

To enable us to continually improve our services, we invite you to provide feedback at any time by either contacting us directly or submitting your feedback via the Wheatbelt NRM website.

Another great way to get involved in the direction of NRM is to join your sub catchment reference group by becoming an Associate Member. Information on how to become an Associate Member can be found on the Wheatbelt NRM website at:

www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au/members/associates

We invite all those interested in natural resource management to work with us to build healthy environments and livelihoods.

CONTACT US

If you would like any further information please contact us. We'd love to hear from you!

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L-R, Toll Temby, Bodallin farmer, Gavin Morgan, farmer and local presenter in Merredin, Dr Liz Kington, Wheatbelt NRM and Peter Cooke, guest presenter from Agknowledge