



## RACAC in the field

In early November more than 100 people from communities in the central west of New South Wales joined RACAC on a field trip to the region.

RACAC members spent a day and a half in the Goonoo and Pilliga forests and surrounding areas. The main purpose of the trip was to discuss the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion assessment with the people who live and work in the region.

Chair of RACAC, Rick Farley, said the trip was extremely useful to Council members and, he hoped, also to the community members who attended.

The Council spent two days with the community discussing issues such as resource management and conservation and the impact of change on small rural towns.

"On both days the Council members were able to talk to the local people," Mr Farley said.

"It helped us to hear first hand what people in these regions think about the future of their communities and the forests – forests which for generations have been a central part of their lives."

"I was particularly impressed by the fact that, while there is some disagreement within the community, there is also a lot of unanimity," Mr Farley said.

"I strongly believe that this unanimity can lead to outcomes which the community can live with."

### The itinerary

RACAC members arrived in Dubbo on Sunday in time to meet stakeholders and head out to Rileys Dam in the Goonoo State Forest for lunch. During the afternoon they heard from the local community on the issues of most concern to them. The day concluded with an inspection of a Department of Mineral Resources drill site and a presentation from the project manager.

On Sunday evening RACAC met with members of local government over dinner in Coonabarabran, discussing among other things the participation of councils in the assessments.

Stakeholders and Council members assembled in Coonabarabran on Monday. The day began with an inspection of the Baradine Sawmill before gathering in the Pilliga State Forest for a presentation on forest management in state forests. The group visited two sites before arriving at The Aloes for lunch and discussion. Debate continued all afternoon, so that a proposed visit to the Pilliga Nature Reserve had to be cancelled to allow sufficient time for everyone to have their say.



Dawn Bell, Planning NSW

## Stakeholder workshops and community briefings

### **NARRABRI** workshops

Unanimity was very much in evidence in Narrabri on November 25 and 26 when the first of a new series of stakeholder group workshops was held. The purpose of these workshops is to identify key issues of importance to local stakeholders in the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion. Groups with a wide range of perspectives, expertise and experience are included to ensure that the workshops are representative of all interests.

Participants at the Narrabri workshop - representing more than twenty community organisations and groups - identified key values for the community and major issues which they all agreed needed to be addressed through the Brigalow Belt South assessment.

High on the list were the questions of conservation incentives on private land and the resourcing of essential work like feral animal and weed control and fire management on public land. These issues will be dealt with in more detail at the next workshop, scheduled to be held in Moree in February.

### **Getting involved**

The workshops are just part of the broad community consultation planned for the next twelve months. Trevor May, our Regional Liaison Officer in Dubbo, and agency staff will continue to meet with individuals and organisations to report on assessment progress and to receive feedback.

In recent weeks Trevor and agency staff have met with regional vegetation management committees, the Baradine Progress Association, The Goonoo Action Group. If you would like a briefing for your group, please contact Trevor on 6885 3200.



John Pickard, NPWS

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### **Some outcomes of the field trip**

Rick Farley has written to stakeholders to thank them for their participation in the field trip. He also told them that, while he was unable to give undertakings about future decisions of government, the visit did have a strong impact on Council members who all expressed the value of the trip for them, both personally and as representatives of their organisations.



Dawn Bell, Planning NSW

Dawn Bell, Planning NSW

He said a number of issues emerged from the trip which can be addressed immediately or in community workshops and other forms of consultation over coming months.

One outcome is a potential addition to the membership of RACAC. Following discussions with local mayors and councillors over their involvement in the assessment, Rick said that RACAC may recommend to the Government that a local government representative be appointed to RACAC. This follows the appointment of a NSW Farmers Association representative earlier this year.

The Chair has also written to those stakeholders who presented RACAC with personal or group submissions, urging their community's participation in the assessment.

"Many other Government decisions have affected your region over the decades," he told them.

"The Brigalow Assessment is perhaps an advance on those decisions which have been taken without your involvement and about which you have only had the opportunity to express your views at the ballot box."

"I therefore urge you to see the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion Assessment as a chance for your community to have genuine input into the process of decision-making."



Dawn Bell, Planning NSW

## Social and economic assessments

Many stakeholders who attended the field trip said they were concerned about the impact on small rural townships of potential changes to public land tenure. Following the field trip, Rick Farley has met with the expert advisers who oversee the social and economic assessments to make sure that they include direct consultation with the community.



John Pickard, NPWS



Dawn Bell, Planning NSW

## Your stakeholder technical representatives

Stakeholder Technical Representatives to RACAC contribute to project development and currently receive all project information as it becomes available.



John Pickard, NPWS

## Funding of community projects

Funding for community projects was raised by a number of stakeholders attending the field trip. One community group, the National Parks Association (NPA), has received approval for funding of \$50,000 to undertake and report on a biodiversity survey of flora and fauna in the region. The NPA's project application was approved because it was not already covered by existing projects and because the application was able to demonstrate the contribution it would make to the overall assessment.

Any project applications to RACAC from community groups will be carefully considered. Applications need to demonstrate the benefit of the project to the overall assessment and to show that it does not duplicate other projects already underway.



Courtesy of SFNSW

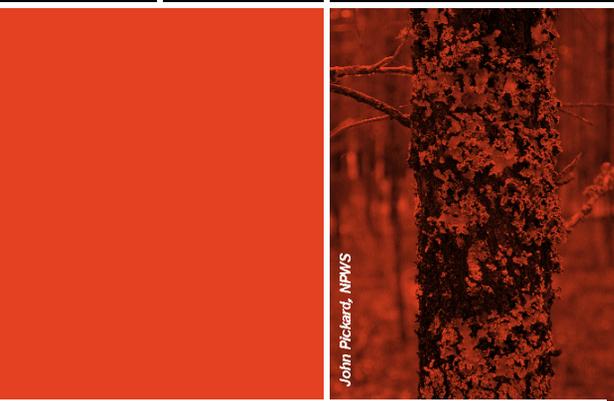


Courtesy of SFNSW

Following community workshops in Dubbo last year, the following community groups nominated a Stakeholder Technical Representative:

- NSW Farmers Association
- Local Government and Shires Association
- Minerals Council
- NSW Aboriginal Land Council
- Nature Conservation Council
- Forest Products Association
- Rural Lands Protection Board
- NSW Apiarists Association
- Friends of Pilliga
- Dubbo Field Naturalists
- Construction, Forest, Mining & Energy Union
- Landcare
- Greening Australia
- Institute of Foresters
- National Parks Association
- Petroleum Exploration Society

If you want to discuss a project proposal, your Stakeholder Technical Representative is the first person you should contact.



### RACAC members

- Mr Rick Farley, Chair
- Ms Sue Holliday, Director-General, Planning NSW
- Mr Roger Wilkins, Director-General, The Cabinet Office
- Dr Bob Smith, Director-General, Department of Land and Water Conservation and Chief Executive Officer, State Forests of NSW
- Mr Brian Gilligan, Director-General, National Parks and Wildlife Service
- Ms Sue Dawson, Assistant Director-General, Environment Protection Authority
- Mr Alan Coutts, Director-General, Department of Mineral Resources
- Ms Linda Burney, Director-General, Department of Aboriginal Affairs
- Professor Andrew Beattie, Scientific Representative
- Mr Rod Towney, NSW Aboriginal Land Council
- Mr Rob Anderson, NSW Farmers
- Mr Russ Ainley, Industry Representative
- Mr Craig Smith, Union Representative
- Mr Jeff Angel, Conservation Representative
- Mr David Paull, Conservation Representative
- Mr John Holliday, State Minerals Advisory Council

### Further information

RACAC News is an occasional publication. To be placed on the mailing list, contact the **Resource and Conservation Division**, Planning NSW, GPO Box 3927 Sydney 2001.

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