

## Busting Local Land Services myths

### **Myth 1: Decisions are set in stone and workshops are a box ticking exercise.**

The 21 community workshops are part of the biggest conversation on agricultural service delivery ever held in NSW. It is a genuine exercise in recording and understanding what communities want from Local Land Services.

We know where we want to end up with Local Land Services - an efficient and smart regional service delivery organisation that services the needs of the modern farmer and the landscape, now and into the future.

The current consultation process is helping the Stakeholder Reference Panel to make recommendations to Minister Katrina Hodgkinson about the nuts and bolts of how to build Local Land Services.

### **Myth 2: There will only be one Local Land Services office in each region.**

There is absolutely no plan to centralise Local Land Services operations into one town in each region.

Wherever there are LHPA and CMA offices now, there are likely to be Local Land Services employees.

Interim Boards will be appointed in the second half of this year to work through operational and logistical issues including location and resource requirements, decisions which will be based on the needs of their regions.

### **Myth 3: R&D is being scrapped as a part of the changes.**

The DPI remains one of the largest providers of rural research and development in Australia with expenditure of more than \$100 million per annum and more than 1,000 active projects across 50 disciplines.

Farmers and landowners will have access to independent agricultural advice from Local Land Services Advisory Officers as well as DPI Industry Development Officers. DPI and Local Land Services will work together through a Service Level Agreement to optimise information flow to farmers and landowners.

Under the new Agriculture NSW strategy, DPI will renew its approach to conducting independent, world class research and work closely with universities, Research & Development Corporations and Co-operative Research Centres, including Meat & Livestock Australia, Australian Wool Industry and Dairy Australia.

In turn, Local Land Services, in partnership with DPI, will deliver locally-relevant research results to farmers and communities.

### **Myth 4: The creation of Local Land Services is a cost cutting exercise.**

The budget measures imposed on the DPI and the creation of Local Land Services are two separate issues.

Firstly, NSW Treasury has advised that it can no longer borrow money to pay the wages of public servants and requires every NSW Government agency to find significant budget savings. The DPI was instructed to save \$40m from its recurrent budget.

Secondly, the creation of Local Land Services is in direct response to the Ryan Review which notes ‘...there are opportunities for greater administrative efficiency and improved services to landholders from LHPAs participating with other agencies in joint compliance and advisory functions on pest animals, animal and plant biosecurity...’

So while Local Land Services is neither the cause nor effect of the budget measures, one of the main drivers for Local Land Services is improving how funds are spent. For instance, Local Land Services will more than halve the number of Board members across the State, meaning the money spent on 202 Board members of CMAs and LHPAs each year can now be dedicated to frontline activities.

## Myth 5: The workshops need to solve the issue of rates.

The Stakeholder Reference Panel is working through the pillars required to build Local Land Services. Currently they have considered regional boundaries, governance structures – including Boards and voting issues, and the services required. However the rating issue is complex and requires more work and time.

The current rating system is inequitable because it does not reflect the reality of biosecurity risk-creators and risk-bearers. The principles of fair apportionment of rates and biosecurity costs are essential.

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal will be commissioned to do a broader review of rates, develop a rating methodology and conduct regional consultation as a part of that review in 2013. It is likely that for the 2014 rating year, that the existing rating base will remain in place.

### More information

Email [local.landservices@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:local.landservices@dpi.nsw.gov.au) | Website [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/locallandservices](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/locallandservices)

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