

Australian *Flexible Learning* Framework

supporting e-learning opportunities

MEDIA RELEASE

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Cyber learning for land managers

Land managers in southern Queensland have been learning just how easy it is to use wikis, audio files and other online resources to access land management training.

The Queensland Murray-Darling Committee (QMDC) was awarded \$39,930 earlier this year from the [Community Engagement Project](#) of the national training system's e-learning strategy, the [Australian Flexible Learning Framework](#), to deliver the *E-learning for natural resource management* project.

The project, which wrapped up this week, has helped land managers use the internet and other electronic tools to access training and improve their knowledge.

"Land managers are very time-poor," said QMDC's Community Training Coordinator Sandy Robertson. "Their time is dependant on the seasons, workloads and family commitments.

"We can offer one-day workshops but that isn't enough time for accredited training. If we use e-tools, such as online forums, wikis and other collaborative tools, then land managers can access flexible training around their commitments."

Seven e-learning workshops have now been held with over fifty people across southern Queensland, including Toowoomba, Goondiwindi, St. George and Roma.

"The workshops introduced participants to personal web pages, blogs, wikis, digital storytelling, online communication and conferencing, and concept mapping," said Sandy.

"Once people are comfortable with online tools, it's easier for them to access collaborative training opportunities and technical material available online."

Landcare Coordinator from Goondiwindi, Tammy Caldicott, regularly delivers land management training to farmers, and coordinates a range of wide-spread farming groups to undertake improved farming practices.

"The tools I learned about at the e-learning workshop will really help me to reach and service a lot more farmers," said Tammy.

"I have to communicate with and coordinate more than 2,900 farmers over a 13,426 square kilometre area, which can be very difficult.

"Because of farming commitments, it can be difficult for farmers to attend field days and workshops, so these tools will help tremendously," she said.

"I've negotiated for QMDC to come out and run another e-learning workshop with one of my landholder groups, to show them how they can tap into this technology to work collaboratively on projects, share knowledge and improve land management practices," she said.

The workshops have also helped a number of community members. Bruce McCollum from the Goondiwindi region is involved with the irrigation industry, natural resource management and community economic development.

"What I do is all about effective communication," Bruce said. "The tools and techniques we learnt about at the workshop certainly provide new ways for interactive communication. I have set up blogs for two of the groups I work with, have a wiki under way, am using skype and gmail, and will be experimenting with googledocs and flickr. It's really a whole new world," he said.

These 'e-tools' have already begun to be incorporated into a range of training opportunities currently being offered to land managers.

"Science and technology is moving at a very fast pace," said Sandy. "So why not use this technology to inform land managers about best practice and innovations as well as support them with accredited training?"

Ends

For more information about the E-learning for natural resource management project:
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Images



Caption: Tammy Caldicott, Waggamba Landcare Coordinator based in Goondiwindi, learns a range of techniques that will help her deliver training to landholders.



Caption: Bruce McCollum learns how to access the most up-to-date information, and share knowledge within his community.



Caption: staff and community members have all participated in a series of e-learning workshops right across southern Queensland.

For high resolution copies of these images, please contact Amelia Radford at QMDC on 07 4637 6234, or ameliar@qmdc.org.au

Notes to editors

- The **Australian Flexible Learning Framework** ([Framework](#)) is the national training system's e-learning strategy, collaboratively funded by the Australian Government and all states and territories at \$15 million annually.
- Since 2000, the Framework has provided the vocational training and education (VET) system with e-learning skills, professional development, resources and support networks to strengthen the skills base of Australia.
- The **Community Engagement Project** is one of 14 Framework projects. It aims to foster and embed e-learning within some of Australia's most disadvantaged communities, in turn helping their economic and regional development. Another key focus of the project is to strengthen partnerships at a local, state and national level in order to inform and engage other community learning initiatives.
- During 2007, six projects are being funded, reaching out to mature age women, volunteers, disengaged learners, the unemployed and land managers – in metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas. The outcomes of these projects and the learning models they create will be shared with other communities across Australia.

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