



Pipeclay Creek and Weir River get funding boost for water quality

A group of 12 farmers in the Pipeclay Creek area, north of Goondiwindi, have received an unprecedented \$250,000 grant from the Australian Government's Community Water Grants scheme to improve the water quality in the Pipeclay Creek and Weir River.

The group, covering 13 properties and over 930,000 hectares at the top of the Weir catchment, will use the funds to implement a local natural resource management plan aimed at reducing run-off and erosion, and improving the health of the local river systems.

Tammy Caldicott, from the Waggamba Landcare Group in Goondiwindi, has been working with the group for 12 months and first had the idea for applying for the grant.

"The Pipeclay Creek community has spent the last four years developing a strategic natural resource management plan for their collective properties and these funds will allow for some of that plan to be implemented sooner rather than later," said Tammy.

"Community Water Grants have traditionally been focused on small grants for social clubs and schools to use water more efficiently, ultimately reducing water use," she said, adding that the Pipeclay Creek application was considered to be a bit 'out of the box'.

"At a glance, it's quite different to other successful projects – these are farmers doing soil conservation, and fencing," she said.

"But, when you look at what this project will achieve, we are doing the same as all those other successful projects, just on a much larger scale."

By increasing infiltration of water in the soil (instead of water running straight into the river), filtering run off through vegetation to clean out sediment, constructing soil conservation works (like contour banks) to control the speed of water movement, and establishing healthy riparian zones to act as a buffer between paddocks and water ways, the group will ensure the quality of water flowing into the Weir River will be much higher.

"Basically, this project will be treating water for discharge into the environment," Tammy said.

"The benefits of increased water quality to the environment and other water users further down the system will be pretty significant. Aquatic plants and animals should flourish, other graziers will have higher quality water for stock, and the townships will have better water security," said Tammy.

Tammy also said the success of their application was partly due to the locality of the group. "Pipeclay Creek meets the Weir River right at the top of Waggamba Shire, so it is a very strategic point for the area to begin addressing a lot of environmental challenges, not just water quality," she said.

The group will continue to work together on other local challenges, like weeds, while they implement their Community Water Grant, believing that a group approach is the best approach.

"A coordinated response between community and government will have a greater impact on achieving quicker and more positive results," said group member Julie Paynter.

When asked how they felt about receiving such a significant grant, the group said they believed it was a sign that communities realise the important role farmers can play in managing the environment so that everyone can benefit.

“You see, we [the Pipeclay Creek group] have a genuine intent to care for the environment,” said group member Di Selby.

“I think this grant is a sign that governments recognise this intent, and also realise the wealth of knowledge in local farmers to manage our natural resources. After all, we are the ones who can make the changes most effectively,” she said.

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Images



Caption: Pipeclay Creek group members, Di Selby of Farleigh Downs, Sally Burey of Alanko, and Julie Paynter, of Currajong, all near Goondiwindi. Sally has agreed to take on the book keeping and reporting for the group's Community Water Grant.