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BROKEN HILL AND BREWARRINA NATURAL RESOURCE EXPERTS RETIRE

This week's Western Catchment Management Authority's (CMA) Board meeting in Cobar will see the end of an era, with two long-standing natural resource management experts retiring from the Board.

Max Hams of Broken Hill and Jenny McLellan of Brewarrina will attend their final board meeting as they retire at the end of October after serving on natural resource advisory organisations for the past two decades.

Chair of the Western CMA, Rory Treweeke, says they have contributed enormously to natural resource management during that time.

"Both Jenny and Max have been extremely generous with their time and dedicated in their service to others, Mr Treweeke said.

Max Hams is the only original member of the catchment advisory organisation. He has been a board member since 1989 when the board was formerly known as the Western Catchment Management Committee and he then served on the Western Catchment Management Board. Max and his wife, Judith, live and work on their property near Broken Hill. They are interested in all aspects of natural resource management but particularly invasive native scrub control. In 1991 Max received a Churchill Scholarship to learn about mesquite control in the southern states of America. Max plans to continue in his role as Chair of the Broken Hill Rural Lands Protection Board.

"Max has a very sound knowledge of how natural resource management and production values should work together," Mr Treweeke said.

"He has been particularly valuable on panels to evaluate people's funding proposals. His hands-on knowledge and experience has ensured that the Board funds projects that will yield the greatest benefits," he said.

Mr Hams describes the past eighteen years as a satisfying, gradual climb.

"When the original Western Catchment Management Board was formed by Ian Causley back in 1989 there were no guidelines and very little funding to achieve results on-ground," Mr Hams said.

"However, there has been gradual development to the point where natural resource management is now a high priority for governments.

"We have clear guidelines set by the Natural Resources Commission and a substantial incentive program to allow people to improve their local area.

"It's been very satisfying to see the good work that's being done around the Catchment, such as fencing of riverbanks.



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"There's great work being done in the paddocks as well. Total grazing pressure is a major issue for far-western NSW and that's being managed across the Catchment.

Invasive native scrub is still a major issue but is slowly being addressed," Mr Hams said.

Jenny McLellan lives on her pastoral and dryland agriculture station near Brewarrina and regularly travels the State representing the far west. Jenny was previously Chair of the Western Catchment Management Committee and Western Catchment Management Board, past President of the Western Division Group of Shires Association, member of NSW Shires Executive, member of the Murray Darling Basin Community Advisory Council, Barwon-Darling River Management Committee, member of WEST 2000 and WEST 2000 Plus and past National President, Isolated Children's Parents Association. In 2002, The Year of the Outback, Jenny received an Order of a Member of Australia (AM) for services to Local Government, natural resource management and community services to rural and remote people across Australia. Jenny will continue in her roles as Chair of the Western Lands Advisory Council and Councillor on the Brewarrina Shire Council.

Mr Treweeke says Jenny's understanding of the political processes has been invaluable.

"Jenny has an in-depth knowledge of politics at a local, state and commonwealth level," Mr Treweeke said.

"She was the Chair of the previous two organisations and oversaw the production of the Western Catchment Blueprint, which was the first accredited in Australia. It has been the guiding document behind the Western Catchment Plan, which is the 'Bible' for the Western Catchment Management Authority," Mr Treweeke said.

Jenny says the greatest change she's witnessed since joining the Western Catchment Management Board in 1990 has been people's ability to embrace change and governments' recognition that adequate resources are needed to convert attitudinal changes into on-ground improvements.

"When we started the idea of making a change, like fencing riparian areas, was simply out of the question for many people – the brick walls went up," Ms McLellan said.

"But in the past seventeen years those attitudes have gradually changed.

"Over time a few people bit the bullet and tried new ideas and others could see the benefits. Groups were established and conservation farming trials have been successfully undertaken.

"We've learnt from each other, which is really the best way to learn.

"There has also been a significant shift in the way the Western Division is perceived.

"When we started there was very little funding and some people had the idea that there were only woody weeds and rabbits in the Western Division.



MEDIA RELEASE



"There has been greater exposure through tourism initiatives such as the Year of the Outback and better access on improved roads. This has contributed to a recognition that that far-western NSW is a region of beauty and diversity with significant attributes that are unique and worth protecting.

"I am very happy to be signing off when the Western CMA is in such a strong position with clear direction and adequate resourcing and I hope that the board members will continue to receive the support that I have over the years," Ms McLellan said.

Mr Treweeke said that he was greatly indebted to Jenny and Max and wished them all the very best in their retirement from the Western CMA.

"Max and Jenny will be replaced by Tony Thompson of Bourke and Diana Hoffman of White Cliffs, who have been appointed to the Board by Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water, Phil Koperberg," Mr Treweeke said.

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