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People Working Together for a Healthy Environment

Media release

Support Continues After the Fires



Image: Presenters Jeff Pow and Darren Doherty with Peel-Harvey Catchment Council regional landcare facilitator Luke Rogers at the After the Fire Workshop held in Waroona.

24 March 2016... Participants at a recent two day After the Fire Workshop held in Waroona say the innovative support program offered to local landowners has been invaluable.

The free workshop, hosted by the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council (PHCC) in partnership with the 'Making More From Sheep' program from Australian Wool Innovation and Meat & Livestock Australia, was designed to provide knowledge, tools and techniques for landscape scale property planning.

The 16 landholders were helped to create individual regeneration plans of their land and farming enterprise. Presenters included Jeff Pow, who rebuilt his South West WA farming enterprise after it was destroyed by a 2013 fire, and Darren Doherty who has world-wide experience in the profitable and regenerative retrofit of broad acre landscapes and is acclaimed as a pioneer in this important field. The project was supported by the PHCC through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme.

Peel-Harvey Catchment Council chairman Andy Gulliver said the PHCC had received very positive feedback from the primary producers and landholders who attended.

“After the workshop, people told us they felt their hope returning because they could see a clear path ahead to re-plan their property,” he said. “The participants all commented on the camaraderie they experienced by coming together and how positive they felt about the future as a direct result.”

Jeff Pow said his own experience had taught him guidance was essential after a trauma experience. “People just can’t think clearly and yet that’s exactly what’s needed. Support and guidance in the aftermath when people simply can’t fend for themselves is essential. I found as my farm recovered, I recovered: we came out of an adverse event into a positive space,” he said.

Darren Doherty said it was important to focus on planning and future positives. “It’s about developing a community of practice to leverage knowledge and share successes. The workshop gave people ideas to ‘reboot’ i.e. to change how they create their water supply, where they place their fences. It enables them to consider a new start with fresh eyes and to find the advantages in the situation such as the capital flowing in from insurance,” he said.

Participants said they attended the workshop for many reasons. Some took the opportunity to identify how to manage the situation for future occurrences. Christine King said she was keen to implement different approaches to address vulnerabilities exposed by the bush fires.

“The workshop showed us options to rebuild our farm that we hadn’t thought of. It was particularly good to hear examples from other people’s experiences,” she said.

Mick and Helen Muir said they approached the workshop as a remaking of their farm.

“For us it has been about seeing our property through different eyes and capitalising on what was there before. Joining in with others has been very stimulating and has given us a lot of hope to start afresh - we’ve come out of the two day workshop feeling very positive,” said Helen Muir.

A follow-up workshop will be taking place in November, and all participants at the initial workshop have the option of further one-on-one support from Darren Doherty.

“Darren is available to every participant for consultation on follow-up on their personal property fire recovery program. As well, participants can follow up learnings with each other in their new virtual ‘community of practice’ on social media and via email,” said Andy Gulliver.

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