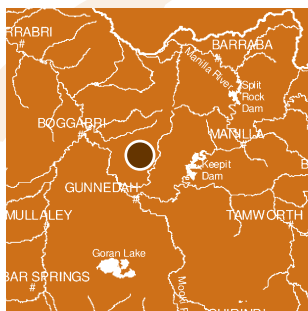




# NRM Excellence in the Namoi Catchment

## Water flows at Myall Springs



**Matt and Mel Carter, Myall Springs, Kelvin, Namoi Catchment**

**Project description:**  
Riparian fencing

**Project goals:**  
Restoration of creeks and waterholes, improved biodiversity, long term viability of cattle enterprise

Back in 1998, Matt Carter visited what had always been a favourite family picnic spot. He found that creek had stopped running and the waterhole had dried up.

*"That was turning point – All the family stories about Rangari indicated that the creeks and water holes had never stopped flowing,"* said Mr Carter.

*"I could see we were doing something wrong – and that gave me a clear goal."*

As the fourth-generation to farm Rangari, Mr Carter says he was able to draw on the family's knowledge and this in part helped him set goals for what he wanted to achieve from both a production and natural resource management perspective.

*I knew that my father, grandfather and great grandfather enjoyed a more fruitful enterprise,"* said Mr Carter.

*"My goal became to get the place back to where it was."*

With a plan in action, and optimistic of their ability to resurrect the springs that once flowed through the property, when Rangari was sub-divided between Matt

and his brother, Matt and Mel named their enterprise Myall Springs.

Since the late 1990s the Carters have implemented a number of inter-related projects on both Rangari and Myall Springs with a focus on riparian fencing and water management. Initially 25km of creeks and waterways were fenced-off and the Carters shifted from set stocking to rotational grazing.

*"We had been set stocking for four generations – and it was becoming evident that areas were becoming overgrazed with sheep and cattle and that this was causing erosion,"* said Mr Carter.

*"I had been working on a place in the New England where they had been rotational grazing since the 1940s so I was learning a lot from that experience and at the same time Dad was getting fired up too."*

### WATER RETICULATION PROJECT

With erosion an issue, the Carters then shifted their focus to fencing off the creeks and waterholes and to a major water reticulation project.



A major fencing project has been implemented at Myall Springs to protect creeks and waterholes.

*I am fortunate enough to be the fourth generation, and I carry with me their knowledge of the land – I know the carrying capacity of the place and the health of the soils and I knew that my father, grandfather and great grandfather enjoyed a more fruitful enterprise."*

*"This was the first step towards returning the creeks to what they used to be, as it would allow them to regenerate," said Mr Carter*

With financial and expert assistance from the Liverpool Plains Land Management Committee (LPLMC), the Carters used their large irrigation dam to reticulate water for stock.

*"I can remember pretty clearly the moment when I knew the approach was working well – right in the middle of the 2006 drought I went for a walk down the creek and I saw that even in the middle of drought the waterholes were actually holding clean water and they were starting to flow," he said.*

*"There were 15 or 20 waterholes that had all but disappeared five years earlier and I could see that turtles, birds and fish had returned also. We haven't really investigated at this stage but I would think that the creeks are now supporting a massive amount of life – so there has been an added biodiversity element also."*

*"I guess I am different to a lot of farmers – I really feel more like an artist than a farmer. It is not just about taking out of the land, it is about building and creating something that is going to last. And it does not necessarily have an*

*instantaneous pay-off, I might suffer financially in the short term because of the decisions I am making, but it is all about long-term profitability and sustainability.*

*"I have tied up some of my really productive country, but on the positive side, I am using all of my land more strategically. For example – I have a 300acre paddock with creek through the middle, in the past we had a situation where the creek was being flogged bare and the rest of the paddock was underutilized. Long term, that's undesirable and not sustainable. Now that I have fenced the creek off I can use all the pasture in that paddock and maximise the paddock's grazing potential."*

## **WORKING WITH MOTHER NATURE**

Mr Carter says the biggest lesson he has learned is how to work with "Mother Nature".

*"It is far easier to work with Mother Nature, rather than against it and that's really the philosophy behind our whole regime. And the other side of that is how quickly the land can heal itself."*

*In developing and implementing his plan for Myall Springs, Mr Carter has worked*





Waterholes and creeks have returned to Myall Springs.

*‘Right in the middle of the 2006 drought I went for a walk down the creek and I saw that even in the middle of drought the waterholes were actually holding clean water and they were starting to flow.’*

*closely with local agencies including LPLMC (of which he is a executive member) and the Namoi Catchment Management Authority (Namoi CMA).*

*“I worked closely with Leith Hawkins from Namoi CMA and that was an empowering experience – Leith understood everything I was trying to do and he has a real passion for the work he is doing with landholders,” said Mr Carter.*

*“And I have also worked closely with LPLMC – they have provided both practical and financial support. They have really been involved in the project at an on-ground level – checking on results, assisting with monitoring. The relationship with LPLMC is based on their tender program and as a landholder there was a contribution to make.*

*“Being able to access funding and support, from agencies like Namoi CMA and LPLMC takes some of the pressure off you – particularly when you are taking a risk on a new way of doing things.”*

After working towards the projects on Rangari and Myall Springs over the last nine years, Mr Carter says he is looking forward to watching the land heal further.

*“It feels a little like that for nine years all I have done is working towards healing the place – now for a couple of years I am just going to enjoy having less weeds and thistles and improved creeks and floodplains,” he said.*

*“Our focus is now building our cash flow and focussing on new priorities with the sub-division of the land.”*

The Carters are now farming 6500 acres at Myall Springs with the operation mainly focussed on grazing, with oats as a winter forage crop.

*“It continues to amaze me how quickly the land heals itself, the results are more than I expected.*

*“When we were kids we would go diving for turtles and it was amazing, and Dad talks about the waterholes being double the size and home to platypuses. I am looking forward to seeing those waterholes restored and I can think of nothing better than making that improvement for future generations. And who knows, that future might just include bring the platypuses back to Myall Springs.”*