

3.1 LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Little River Catchment is situated within the Cabonne, Wellington and Dubbo City Local Government Areas. The majority of the catchment is within the Cabonne Shire with land to the east in the Wellington Shire and minor parts in the north-west within the Dubbo City Council area. A very small portion of the catchment, within Goobang National Park, is located within the Narromine and Parkes Shires. (See Figure 2).

Table 2. Area and percentage of the catchment covered by local government areas.

Local Government Area	Area (Ha)	% of catchment	Area of Shire (ha)	% of Shire
Cabonne	162196.6	62.8	601754	27.0
Dubbo	22292.1	8.6	333944	6.7
Narromine	128.0	0.1		~0
Parkes	336.6	0.1		~0
Wellington	73368.9	28.4	407567	18.0
TOTAL	258322.2	100.0		

Local Government has extensive planning powers under the Local Government Act and the Environmental and Planning Assessment Act. All councils have to produce a Local Environmental Plan (LEP) which specifies the land uses allowed within the shire. Local government has considerable ability to restrict landuse in any area, and these directives can be quite specific under Development Control Plans.

The three councils use similar guidelines for developing the landuse zones within their LEPs, although Wellington Council has further divided some zones to take into account minor land uses. The Dubbo LEP - Rural Areas takes into account a number of different environmental objectives. A summary of these zones is provided in Appendix 2a.

Local Government has been given a great deal of environmental responsibility. They are obliged to ensure that development does not harm the environment. An outline of their legislative responsibilities is also provided in Appendix 2b.

Cabonne, Wellington and Dubbo councils are all involved with landcare to varying degrees. The three councils in the catchment are involved in a range of resource management activities which can impact on, or provide support for, the implementation of a Catchment Management Plan. These are outlined in Appendix 2c.

There are two Regional Organizations of Councils (ROCs) in the area. These are Orana ROC (OROC) around Dubbo and Central ROC (CentROC). These groups of councils share resources to help improve efficiencies and economies of scale.

However, the individual councils are responsible for making determinations on environmental issues within their shires. This has an enormous implication for the environment, as councils only have to take into account the impact of the development under application, which means the cumulative impacts of development do not have to be considered. This situation is exacerbated if there is poor communication between councils.

3.2 DEMOGRAPHICS

IveyATP (40) estimated the population of the Little River Catchment only (not including the portion of the Bell River within this plan) to be 2263 in 1991. Of these 566 people lived in Yeoval (13%) and Cumnock (11%), with the remainder (76%) on farms, small area holdings or hamlets e.g. Obley or Baldry.

The lack of a service town within the Little River Catchment and substandard road, rail and communication services makes the area quite isolated. The residents consider themselves disadvantaged due to the lack of available services and highlight the poor access to adult education as a significant impediment in improving management skills.

Within the catchment, there is a central school at Yeoval and a primary school located at Cumnock, as well as at Wambangalang and Geurie just outside the catchment. Wellington provides for primary and secondary education. Yeoval has recently extended its school, which now provides education up to Year 12. Many rural children board away from home to complete their secondary education and ensure they are well prepared for higher education.

The Yeoval community has managed to maintain a Multi Purpose Medical Centre in the village, due to enormous voluntary efforts by local residents. There is a permanent doctor in Yeoval, but not in Cumnock.

The catchment is largely dependent on agriculture and related industries. Agriculture employs 52% of the population, with retailing the only other significant sector. The unemployment rate is quite high as low rent attracts people on unemployment benefits to the villages (pers comm. LR Executive)

IveyATP (40) estimated there were 221 farms covering almost 145 000 ha or 63% of the actual Little River catchment. This is an average area of 656 hectares. These figures do not include small area farms. The study area covers 258 300 ha of which 21 180 ha is crown land under timber or urban development. These figures suggest that there are approximately 350 commercial farms within the plan area.

The Wellington-Dubbo Regional Plan will deal in greater depth with the demographics of the community and the social issues and concerns raised by participants at the consultation meetings. These issues are more likely to be successfully addressed at a larger regional scale, where the cooperation and coordination of the whole spectrum of the community, including local governments and service industries, can be utilized to implement programs across the region.

References

- (5) Cabonne Shire Council - *State of the Environment 1995 - 1996*
- (14) Cabonne Shire Council - *State of the Environment 1997 - 1998*
- (15) Cabonne Shire Council - *Cabonne Local Environmental Plan 1991*
- (16-19) Dubbo City Council - *State of the Environment Reports 1995-1998*
- (20) Dubbo City Council - *Dubbo Local Environmental Plan 1997 - Rural Areas*
- (23) Wellington Shire Council - *Wellington Local Environmental Plan 1995*
- (40) IveyATP (1998) - *Costs of Dryland Salinity Phase Two Dryland Salinity Survey of the Talbragar and Little River Catchments - Central West NSW - Volume 3 Costs to the Little River Catchment*