

Douglas Thomas:

Mulwala's Catchment Champion



Catchment Champion

Year 3-6 Class
Mulwala Public School



Creative Catchment Kids

Creative Catchment Kids is an initiative of the Murray Darling Association and Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. It aims to improve engagement between the Murray Catchment Management Authority and school students by providing opportunities for positive and authentic ventures that encourage students to develop creative solutions to natural resource management issues. www.murray.cma.nsw.gov.au/creative-catchment-kids.html

Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre

The Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre is located in Burrumbuttock, north of Albury in southern NSW. Since 1995, the centre, which is adjacent to Burrumbuttock Public School, has provided opportunities for discovery and learning about the natural environment, the ecology of the local woodlands and the beauty of native plants. www.wirraminna.org

Murray Darling Association

The Murray Darling Association has membership of over 100 Local Government councils in the Murray-Darling Basin, as well as community groups, businesses and individuals with an interest in ensuring that the Basin continues as a valuable asset for all Australians. Since 1950, the Association has initiated various school and community education programs on managing the Basin's land and water resources. www.mda.asn.au



Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeeKdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area. www.envirostories.com.au

Douglas Thomas: Mulwala's Catchment Champion

Authors: Year 3-6 Class

Teacher: Kylie Becker

School: Mulwala Public School

Catchment Champions

In 2013, students involved in the Creative Catchment Kids program researched and wrote stories about 'Catchment Champions', people who have made important contributions to managing natural resources in their local community. The program was generously funded by the Murray and Murrumbidgee catchment management authorities.

The Catchment Champions books are part of the Enviro-Stories Education Program.



**Catchment Management
Authority**
Murray



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Murrumbidgee

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Douglas Thomas is a farmer near Mulwala. He was born at Swan Hill, VIC. He grew up on a farm about 50km North East of Swan Hill. His family then moved to Mulwala where he and his four sisters all attended Mulwala Public School. They bought farms called Lambruk and Larapinta.

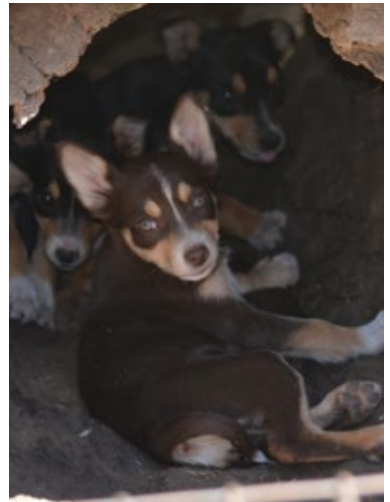


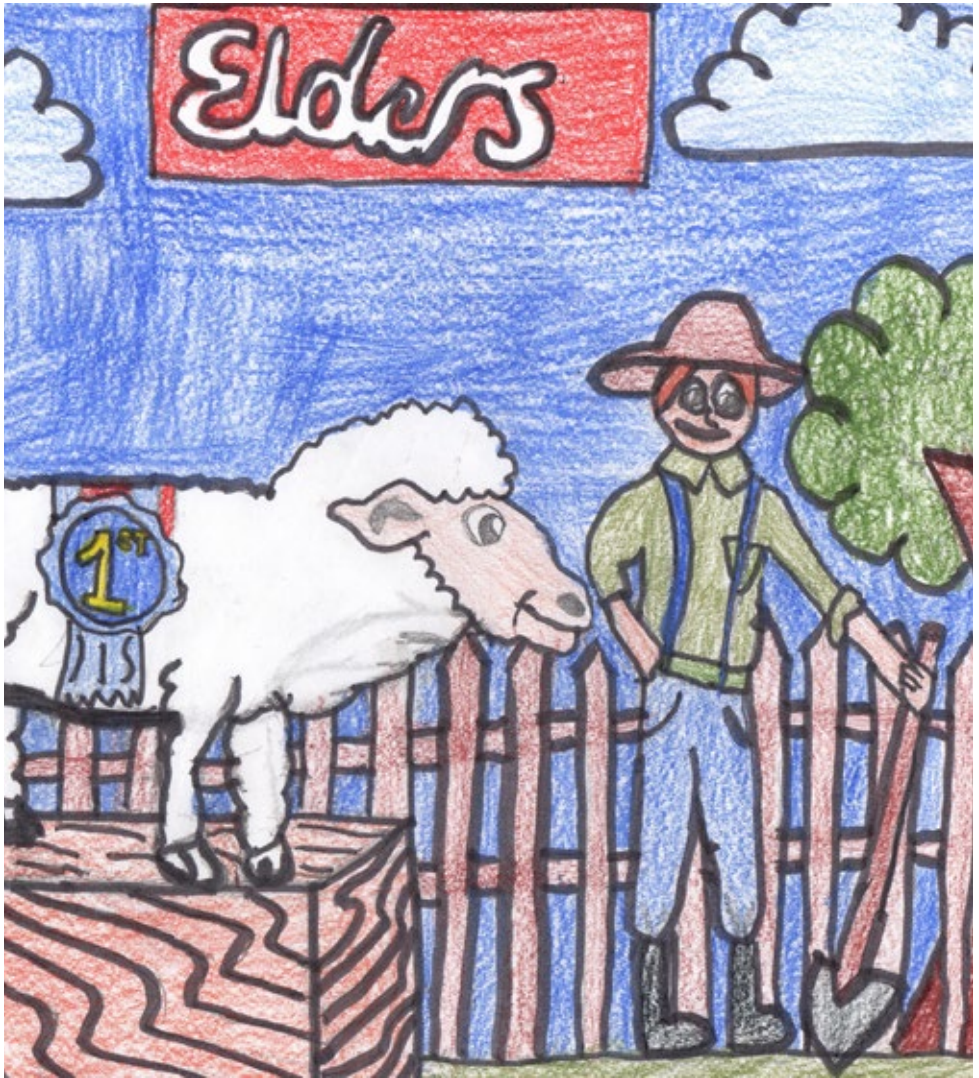


Douglas's schooling was right here at Mulwala Public School, but back then it was a central school. A central school means that the children go there from Kindergarten until Year 10. The school was much bigger than it is now, however Douglas remembers playing games and hanging with friends just like the children at Mulwala Public School do now.



Growing up on a farm expanded his love for animals a lot. He can even remember his first pet which was a fox terrier called Trixie. He must have liked his fox terrier because he ended up with eleven more! When he was a child he looked after injured and abandoned baby animals such as lambs, birds, calves and ducks.



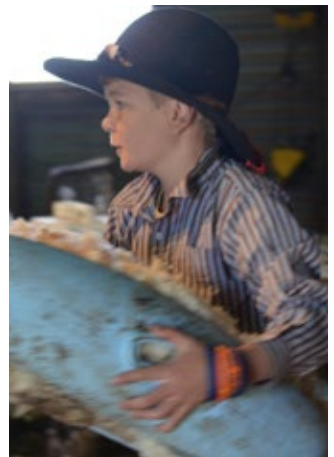


Later, after Douglas finished high school, he worked for Elders in Melbourne, Bendigo and Hay where he did sheep classing, wool sales and ram buying. Douglas has not always been a farmer but all his jobs have been about farming and agriculture.



In 1994, on the 12th of March, Douglas married Bronwyn. They met at a ram sale in 1990.

Together they have four children, two boys Samuel and Lawson and two girls Bridget and Myranda. Samuel is in our class at Mulwala and he has to do lots of jobs around the farm with his brothers and sisters.

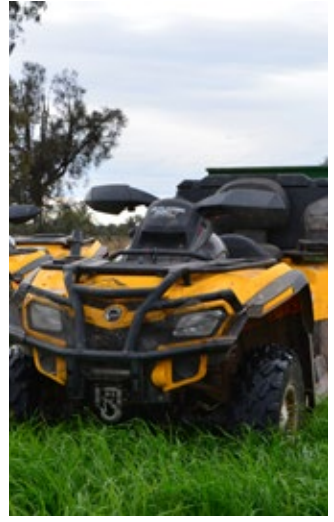


Douglas's greatest achievements have included catching an 180 centimetre groper whilst on holidays, a fallow buck with his two sons and a 180 kilogram boar at Red Tank. He enjoys hunting and fishing with his boys and always remembers the rules about humanity. Douglas never catches fish to put in the freezer because that is stifling the fish population of our waterways.



When Douglas's father retired, Douglas offered to take over the farm. The farm that Douglas owns is called Lambruk which is a native Aboriginal word for Murray Pine trees. He wanted to stay there because his father owned the farm and farms are often passed down from generation to generation.





He likes working on a farm because he gets to be around animals and he has a passion for agriculture. He also loves it because he likes to see baby animals being born. His favourite animal on the farm are sheep because they are the most profitable. Sheep eat the grass and keep the soil useable and well nourished.



On the farm Douglas grows crops including wheat and other grains that is sent to places like Uncle Toby's for oats. He then lets the sheep into the paddocks to help rotate pastures and this looks after the earth. He believes that his job is so important because everything we eat comes from a farm and other things like clothing and materials come from farms too.





Douglas uses very different machinery to that of his father. Some of the new technologies such as Global Positioning Systems (GPS) help to mark out paddocks and plant crops. He believes that ‘share’ farming is an important part of new farming because of the large costs of equipment such as tractors, headers and seeders.





The weather will always be the most important tool that Douglas uses on the farm. It is quite common for Douglas to spend anywhere up to 40 hours straight trying to test and prepare his crops based on the perfect conditions of moisture in the air. Douglas said that sometimes the best conditions are just before sunrise which is very early!

Douglas's career and life's work has allowed our environment to provide resources that put food on our plate and clothes on our backs. We benefit from Australian made and grown so that it is our job to celebrate Douglas's work and buy quality Australian products. He is at the start of a journey and helps our earth stay sustainable. With his continued innovations and ideas, our Australian agriculture will benefit for years to come.





Year 3-6 Class

2013 Year 3- 6, Mulwala Public School

The 2012 and 2013 Creative Catchment Kids writing program was showcased at the Seventh World Environmental Education Congress, held in Morocco during June 2013.



Catchment Management Authority Murray



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Catchment Management Authority Murrumbidgee